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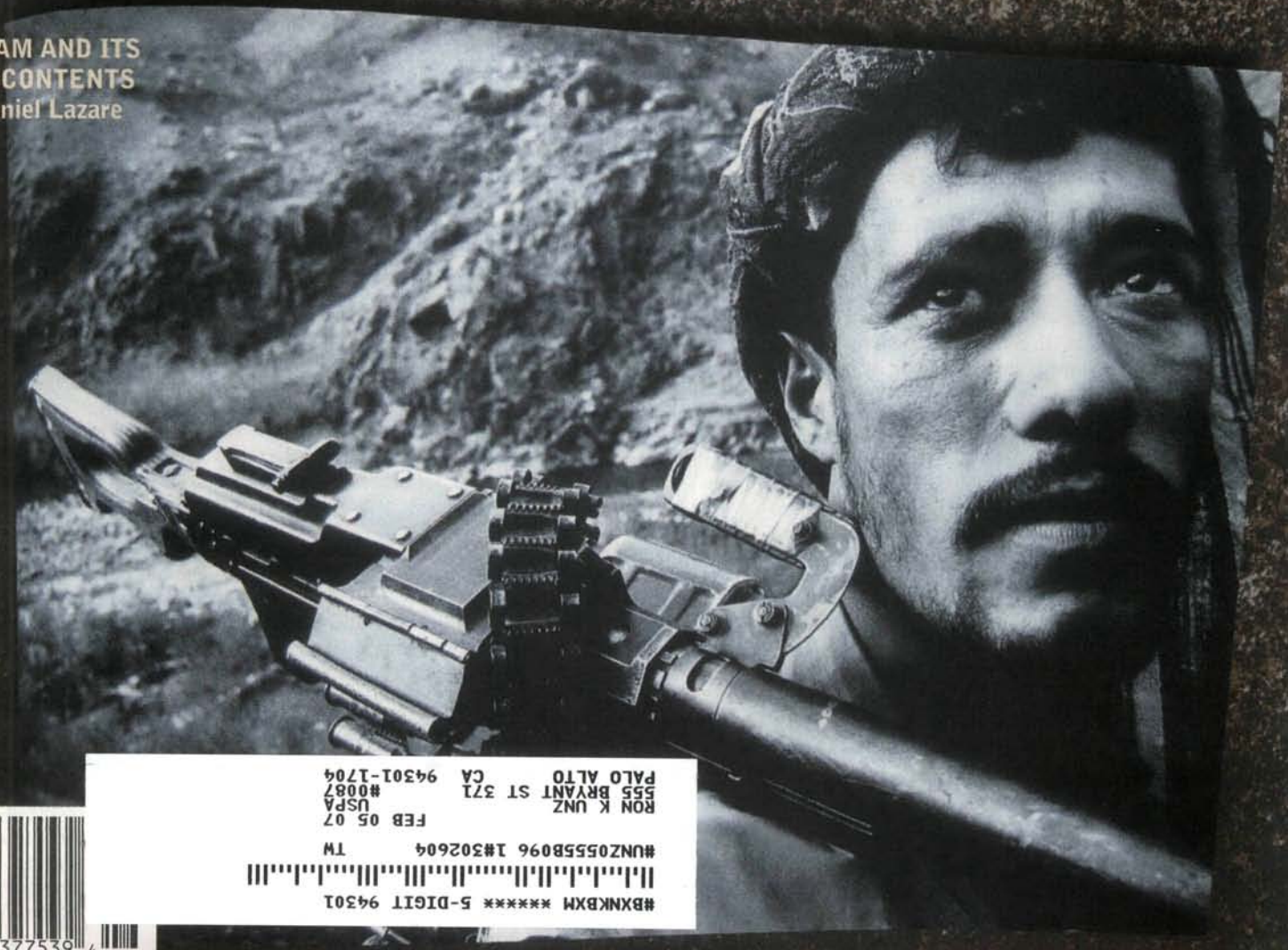

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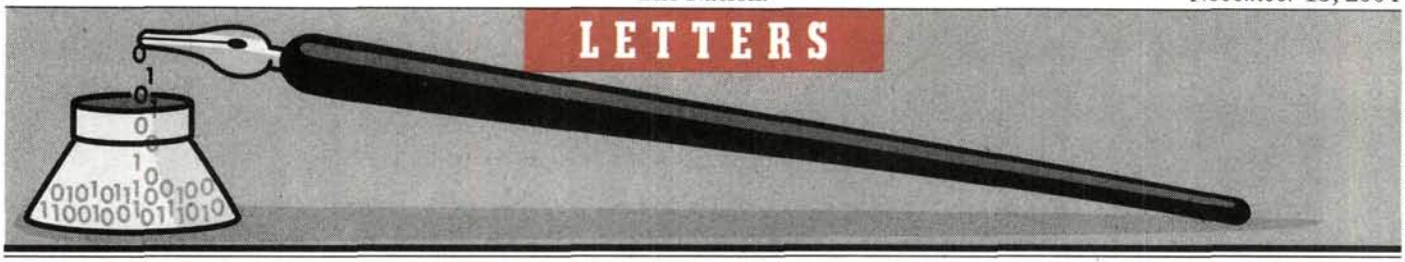

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

The intensity of this election cycle, combined with our biweekly summer schedule, pushed the mail on two quite well received articles to the back of our letters file. Esther Kaplan's July 12 "The Jewish Divide on Israel" drew a huge positive response. Liza Featherstone's "Will Labor Take the Wal-Mart Challenge?" [June 28] also compelled many thoughtful letters. This sampling proves that some issues are timeless. —*The Editors*

JEWS WHO JUST SAY NO—TO AIPAC

Warsaw, Ind.

■ Thank you for the article by Esther Kaplan about the silent Jewish majority! I've had a hard time believing that everyone in the Jewish community wants to wrap their arms around Ariel Sharon. You have restored my respect for Judaism. Every member of the House and Senate must read this.

DEBBIE COLLEEN PARKER

Philadelphia

■ Judaism has nurtured in me the values of compassion and social justice that transcend national boundaries. A Jewish state must reflect, not violate, these values. Occupation violates human dignity and breeds despair. I hope that the people who have been calling me slanderous, hurtful names as I stand for justice, often in solidarity with Palestinians, will read this brave article. SUSAN LANDAU

Honolulu

■ Esther Kaplan's report on the growing debate in the American Jewish community about the Israel-Palestine issue is most welcome. It is encouraging that the United States is emerging from the suffocating effects of the Bush and Sharon administrations' parallel "circle the wagons, don't think" reactions to 9/11 and Palestinian resistance. Obsessed by their narrow view of national security, Bush and Sharon have steered their ships of state into dangerous waters of scofflaw isolationism, ironically rendering them less secure. In addition, by elevating the ends over the means, both leaders have seriously eroded their great contributions to world culture: constitutional guarantees of human rights and the ethical heritage of Judaism. It seems fitting that increased numbers of concerned Americans are pulling back the suffocating cloak of unquestioning "patriotism" and "support for Israel" at the same time. JANET THEBAUD GILLMAR

Philadelphia

■ Esther Kaplan is my hero for informing the public, and dissenting Jews who may feel isolated and alone, that there are lots of us out here. AIPAC doesn't speak for the majority of Jewish Americans, although it has convinced Congress that it does, and it has been responsible for the defeat of many Congress members who have dared to defy AIPAC's gag rule on what may be said about Israel's crimes against Palestinian humanity. I've had numerous phone talks with my Representative's foreign affairs aide, who patiently tells me, again, that it would be political suicide for his boss to vote against more, and more, military aid for Israel, more, and more, resolutions supporting Israel's theft of Palestinian lands and aquifers for new or expanded settlements. Jewish-Americans of conscience in every US city are networking online, working to convince Jews and non-Jews alike that it's not anti-Semitic to condemn Israel's policy of Palestinian ethnic cleansing.

Jewish-Americans of all stripes are well aware that the United States has the power to bolster—or alter—Israel's policies toward the Palestinians. It is time to stop allowing AIPAC and its agents in the White House and Congress to dictate policy on Israel. It is time for Jewish-Americans of conscience to help restore the honor of the Jewish people. We have nothing to lose but our shame. EVALYN F. SEGAL

Lenox, Mass.

■ Esther Kaplan is right. There is a growing movement among American Jews against the occupation. American aid to Israel—financial and diplomatic—fuels the conflict. A change in US policy, such as making aid contingent on progress toward a negotiated settlement, could provide a strong incentive to resume peace talks. American Jews have great influence in this regard—and also great responsibility. What Israel is doing to the Palestinians violates the ethical precepts and traditions of our religion. It is time for us to find our voice and tell our leaders that we stand against the oppression of any race or people (see www.semitism.org).

ANDREW SCHAMESS

New York City

■ There is a consensus in the American Jewish community that Esther Kaplan cites (but underestimates), of which many of us in the peace camp are very proud—the 60 to 70 percent support for a two-state solution, an end to the occupation and withdrawal from the settlements. That consensus mirrors, almost exactly, the consensus held by the Israeli public, and it transcends whoever is prime minister in Israel.

Largely because of the brilliant light shone by the Israeli and Palestinian patriots who fashioned the Geneva Initiative, Prime Minister Sharon spoke to that consensus in his proposal for unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. Now the task for the peace camps, in Israel and the United States, is to insure that the Gaza withdrawal actually takes place, and that it is not used as a pretext for Israel to hold on to huge swaths of the West Bank.

If there is to be hope, it is not in cultivating a schism among Israelis or American Jews but in finding a way for a positive Palestinian consensus in favor of harmony with the underlying consensus in the Jewish communities of Israel and, secondarily, the United States. That is what those of us in the American Jewish peace camp who believe in a two-state solution and the right of both peoples to live in peace and security are working for. CHARNEY V. BROMBERG

Executive director, Meretz USA

Madison, Wisc.

■ If Esther Kaplan is accurately portraying the main fault line in American Jewish attitudes toward Israel by focusing on the differences between conservative, right-wing organizations like AIPAC and more "liberal" groups like Brit Tzedek, then we are in trouble.

I am the founder of the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project. Our organization has two key aims: to give a local voice to the Palestinian cause and to establish grassroots humanitarian programs on the ground in Rafah, in Gaza. We have been modestly successful despite united opposition from organized American Jewry.

This past spring and summer, the local Jewish leadership here in Madison spearheaded a vicious, unethical and sustained attack on me personally and on the Madison-Rafah project in general. Objections to our project ranged from accusations that we are anti-Semitic, Israel-bashing terrorist sympathizers wanting to sister with a "terrorist city," to the claim that such a project is just "too divisive" for little Madison—i.e., it upset too many Jews.

While support for this project was numerically far greater and broadly based, opposition was, with very few exceptions, entirely Jewish. Nonetheless, Madison mayor Dave Cieslewicz, beholden to Madison's Jewish leadership, threatened to veto the resolution if it passed. Not a single major Jewish organization supported the Madison-Rafah project, though we received international attention, and of the five local Jewish congregations, the rabbi from only one of them—Laurie Zimmerman of the tiny Reconstructionist synagogue—voiced support for our project. It may seem to self-identified liberal and conservative Jews that they differ significantly from one another. But to the rest of us these differences are cosmetic: When it comes to allowing Palestinians to speak for themselves, not one of these groups is ready to say yes.

JENNIFER LOEWENSTEIN

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EDITORIALS

Fix the Electoral System

Before most votes were cast in the November 2 presidential election, and before any of them were counted, tens of millions of Americans worried about whether the nation's patchwork of systems for casting and counting ballots would break down as badly as it did in 2000. Six in ten Americans surveyed by the Associated Press said it was unlikely that a clear winner would be known by the morning of November 3. That opinion reflects the fact that four years after a close vote in Florida created a thirty-six-day recount battle that ended without all the votes being counted, America has done little to fix its broken electoral system.

The first problem is unequal protection: America has no uniform standard for registering voters, resolving challenges to those registrations, designing ballots, guaranteeing access to the polls, creating a paper trail when votes are cast, counting ballots and, in the case of a close election, recounting them. Instead, there is a collection of fifty-one different systems with often radically different rules. "It's a tragedy in many ways that the standard for accountability and integrity and objectivity is better in many Third World countries than in ours," says former President Jimmy Carter, who explains that the Carter Center, which monitors elections around the world, could not do so in the United States because of a lack of consistent standards and a lack of commitment on the part of both major parties to cooperate with the monitoring process.

The first major problem in effect guarantees the second: A system with inconsistencies rooted in the theory of states' rights, which made possible the original sin of slavery and the secondary sin of segregation, lends itself uniquely and unquestionably to contemporary manifestations of Jim Crow politics. In Ohio, the quintessential swing state, Republicans have recruited 3,600 party loyalists to challenge the qualifications of voters in what the *New York Times* describes as "heavily Democratic urban neighborhoods of Cleveland, Dayton and other cities." In Wisconsin, another battleground state, the Milwaukee county executive, a Republican, initially refused to allow the printing of what Milwaukee city officials determined to be an appropriate number of ballots to handle an expected surge in voter participation in heavily African-American and Latino neighborhoods in their city. In South Dakota, challenges to Native American voters are expected. And, yes, Florida Governor Jeb Bush's appointed secretary of state was still purging voter lists as the election approached.

Whether or not this Election Day degenerates into a democratic disaster, the American electoral system is in need of radical reform. When the 2004 election is over, the first order of business for Congress should be to work with the Carter Center, the US Commission on Civil Rights and other groups to implement the easy reforms that would make for fairer and more reliable elections. Congress should create independent and impartial agencies to administer, oversee and certify elections at the state and national levels; assure that every voting machine in the country is equipped to verify votes and produce a paper record; re-enfranchise ex-felons; establish national standards for everything from voter registration to opening hours for polling places to the counting and recounting of ballots; and disburse funding to implement those standards and replace America's separate, unequal and unreliable electoral systems with a universal system worthy of a country that fancies itself the world's greatest democracy.

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COMMENT

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Iraq's Civilian Casualties

The civilians of Falluja are negotiating to stave off a threatened US-led military incursion. American military spokesmen insist that US-led forces will do their utmost to spare civilian bystanders. But if they don't, the newly free Iraqi press will have trouble reporting the story. The Iraqi Health Ministry, on orders of the US-backed government, has stopped releasing Iraqi casualty figures to journalists. The ministry's numbers had been turning up in news reports, most notably in a Knight Ridder story on how many Iraqi civilians have been killed in recent fighting, which was widely distributed in the United States.

So the problem of Iraqi civilian casualties reverberates in the troubled US military occupation of Iraq. But what isn't known about ordinary Iraqis dying from US firepower is a big part of that problem. The Pentagon shows no interest in the subject. "We don't do body counts," Gen. Tommy Franks has famously said. And in the chaos of Iraq, reporters and public health authorities simply can't keep track. This isn't just a problem for the Iraqis whose lives are at risk. It's a problem for Americans trying to figure out how the military is going to overcome the hostility it now faces in Iraq.

On the subject of civilian casualties, Americans lack what they usually love: a nice round number that endows an emotional issue with numeric authority. In September the talisman figure of 1,000 US combat deaths became the emblem of growing national doubts about the war in Iraq. But all the experts on Iraqi civilian casualties argue persuasively that there is no comparably accurate figure that might sum up the suffering of the Iraqi people.

On October 19, the *New York Times* took a step toward settling on a civilian casualty number by reporting that "the best estimates" of private groups and independent news organizations are in "the 10,000 to 15,000 range." That is comparable to the figure given by iraqbodycount.net, a website run by US and British antiwar activists, which gives a low estimate of 13,928 civilian deaths in Iraq and a high one of 16,053. The site's researchers carefully monitor news reports of civilians killed in warlike incidents and because of breakdowns in law and order and healthcare and sanitation problems, weed out stories that appear in only one place and add up all casualties.

Complaints about the group's reliance on media sources are overblown. The bigger problem is that Iraq Body Count's figures do not distinguish between Iraqi civilians killed by US troops and Iraqis killed by jihadists. The site's founders say that, as an occupying power, the United States is responsible under the Geneva Convention for all violence suffered by Iraqi civilians. The result is confusion. According to the Iraq Body Count methodology, if the Iraqi insurgency killed twice as many civilians as US Marines next month, all of those deaths would be chalked up to Washington's policy. That may be morally satisfying, but it doesn't really measure how US soldiers are treating Iraqi noncombatants. The Iraq Body Count number is more reliable as an index of Iraqi chaos than civilian casualties of US force.

But there's another way to gauge civilian casualties, and that is to consult not the media and not human rights groups but US troops themselves. That's what a team of six mental health spe-

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cialists did last year. In a study published in the July 1 *New England Journal of Medicine* (*NEJM*), they asked two groups of Army and Marine troops about what they had seen and done in Iraq. The results of this survey suggest that the *Times* estimate of Iraqi civilian casualties, like the Iraq Body Count number, is too low. The number of civilian casualties inflicted by US forces may be underestimated, even by the liberal press and war critics.

Asked if they had ever killed an Iraqi noncombatant, 28 percent of the 794 Marines surveyed said yes. Two-thirds reported killing an enemy combatant. Fourteen percent of 861 soldiers from the Army's 3rd Infantry Division reported they had killed at least one Iraqi noncombatant. Forty-eight percent reported killing an Iraqi combatant. These troops, it should be added, also reported significant rates of heroism. Nineteen percent of the Marines said they had saved the life of a soldier or civilian. Twenty-one percent of the soldiers said the same.

The *NEJM* survey offers what no other study of Iraqi civilian casualties provides: a sense of the prevalence of lethal violence inflicted on Iraqi civilians, as seen by US troops themselves. The troops surveyed were typical of US forces as a whole. The demographic characteristics were "very similar to those of the general, deployed, active-duty infantry population, except that officers were undersampled," according to the authors. These soldiers served under fairly typical conditions for combat units. The 3rd Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force participated in the march to Baghdad and also experienced the eruption of the Iraqi insurgency in the summer and fall of 2003.

Two qualifiers need to be added. First, the *NEJM* study suggested that only 25 percent of US forces faced the same type of combat situations as these units. Second, these soldiers described civilian casualties in six- to eight-month deployments. The resulting figures need to be extrapolated to a conflict now it its twentieth month. But if you adjust the numbers to reflect those realities, and if the Army and Marine combat troops killed civilians at the same rate as their comrades in the *NEJM* study, then US ground combat forces would have been responsible for the deaths of an absolute minimum of 13,881 noncombatants since March 2003. And that figure omits all civilian deaths caused by the Air Force and by noncombat Army and Marine forces.

Needless to say, this figure is a suggestive estimate, not a definitive number. And a third caveat is necessary. Iraq was also a very deadly place for many civilians under the reign of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi dictator killed an estimated 300,000 people during his twenty-four-year reign, an average of 12,500 a year. In other words, the *NEJM* survey suggests that US military power may now be more hazardous to the health of Iraqi civilians than the dictatorship it destroyed.

JEFFERSON MORLEY

Jefferson Morley (morleyj2000@yahoo.com) writes the "World Opinion Roundup" column for washingtonpost.com.

NATION NOTES

The Nation Institute is pleased to announce the first Alfred A. Knobler Journalism Fellow. She is Pamela Newkirk, an associate professor of journalism at New York University and the author of *Within the Veil: Black Journalists, White Media*, which received the 2001 National Press Club Award for media criticism. A member of the *Newsday* team that won a 1992 Pulitzer Prize for spot reporting, she's written on the media and African-American art and culture for publications including *The Nation*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and *Artnews*. She lectures widely on media diversity and was the editor of *A Love No Less: More Than Two Centuries of African American Love Letters*.

* * *

ON THE WEB: As Republicans attempt to disenfranchise voters through intimidation and bureaucratic maneuvers, *Nation* correspondents in swing states report on the battle to preserve voting rights. Read "Ground War 2004," ongoing dispatches now and through election day, at www.thenation.com.

Antifeminists Hit Iraq

As the right wing's antifeminist front, the sisters of the Independent Women's Forum have been such a hit in this country that they're now getting taxpayer money to take their act on the road. In September the State Department announced the IWF would receive part of a new $10 million grant program to "train Iraqi women in the skills and practices of democratic public life."

At first glance, the IWF might seem a surprising choice for such a task. Founded in the early 1990s with funds from conservative foundations—Scaife, Bradley, Carthage and the rest—the IWF, by its own definition, leads the US opposition to the US women's liberation movement. The group's members, now peppered throughout the Bush Administration and the media, include Lynne Cheney and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao.

The IWF could teach plenty about how to mount slanderous media attacks that skew the debate on affirmative action, equality in education and equal pay, and they know a thing or two about rolling back government regulations and challenging pro-equality legislation in court. But women's groups that work in Iraq say that's not exactly what Iraqi women need now.

Contaminated water is health problem number one. "Whole communities are suffering from outbreaks of cholera, intestinal infections and kidney stones," says Yifat Susskind of Madre. Malnutrition is up and jobs are scarce. Women, once 40 percent of public sector workers, became mostly unemployed after occupation layoffs. And then there's the fear that women will bear the brunt of US plans for large-scale privatization in Iraq, initiated during the administration of former occupation chief Paul Bremer.

"As society's primary caretakers, Iraqi women will be forced to absorb the burden created by the elimination of public healthcare, education, housing, food subsidies, water services and other programs designed to meet the basic needs of the population," says Susskind. "The majority of the poor, they stand to lose access to critical social services in a 'free-market' Iraq."

Yet the State Department's plan, as described by Coordinator for International Women's Issues April Palmerlee in September 2002, is to "promote freedom, faith and free markets through

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COMMENT

promoting women's issues" in Iraq. In other words, push privatization using the rhetoric of women's rights.

Here's where the flacks and ideologues of the IWF come in. Although primarily known stateside for its critique of feminism, the IWF has always served an economic agenda: "free market" capitalism, corporate rights and government deregulation. The group opposes the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, for example, because they consider its equal-pay requirements "antithetical to free market principles."

Nancy Pfotenhauer, president and CEO of the IWF, is a former director of the Washington office of Koch Industries and was chief economist on George Bush Senior's Council on Competitiveness. She heads not only IWF but also its sidekick, Americans for Prosperity, a deregulation lobby subsidized heavily by Koch, the second-largest privately held company in the United States. (Koch has been caught stealing oil from federal and Indian land and covering up the release of clouds of carcinogenic benzene from its Texas refinery.) Pfotenhauer, who used her spot at the IWF to lobby against CAFE emission standards (a woman's issue?), has no credentials in advancing women's democratic rights, but she could teach Iraqis a barrelful about privatizing oil. (Imagine the rallies: Oil rights are women's rights!)

The IWF's grant is for a twelve-month stint, though Iraq's elections are supposedly just two months away. It will be sharing its grant money with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD), whose "distinguished advisers" include Newt Gingrich, Richard Perle, William Kristol and Gary Bauer. IWF's Iraqi partners include Women for a Free Iraq (WFI), an organization made up mostly of Iraqi exiles in America who put a female-friendly gloss on the US operation to oust Saddam Hussein and now on Iraqi "democracy."

The WFI received early support from the FDD and Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, whose office oversees the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative grants. Dobriansky held numerous press conferences highlighting the WFI around the US invasion, including one at the Heritage Foundation. "Those who have taken to the streets with signs reading NO WAR IN IRAQ are misled," a Kurdish WFI member told the Washington press corps at one event a few weeks after the February 15, 2003, antiwar demonstrations. Dobriansky's office also arranged for WFI members to meet with George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell. One of the exiled women on the WFI circuit was Zainab Al Suwaij, the director of the American Islamic Congress (another State Department co-grantee), who spoke at this year's Republican convention.

What will the IWF do with the money? If its meetings so far are any indication, it will preach the virtues of unfettered capitalism. This July the IWF held a summit on "democracy, economic liberty, free markets and women," co-sponsored by the Women's Alliance for a Democratic Iraq (a group formed of WFI members and backed by FDD). "WAFDI's mission is to empower Iraqi women in all areas of the society. And, definitely that won't be possible without a free market," wrote WAFDI's director, Basmi Fakri, in an e-mail. "IWF hosted a two hour session only on [the] free market for the Iraqi women delegates who came for a ten day democracy training."

Upon hearing of their grant award this fall, the IWF declared, "We'd like to train 150 pro-democracy women on the fundamentals of democracy, women's political activism in a democracy…to enable Iraqi women to participate in their country and help Iraq develop a democracy that best suits the needs of that country." Evidently, it believes democracy comes in many shapes and sizes. The kind it and the neocons like best should come with a label: "Made in the USA." LAURA FLANDERS AND LAURA ROSS

Laura Flanders, host of The Laura Flanders Show *on Air America Radio, is the author of* Bushwomen: Tales of a Cynical Species. *Laura Ross is a litigation paralegal and researcher/writer in Minneapolis.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

BILL CLINTON JOINS THE CAMPAIGN

The party knows he has some faults,
But what he has they need: That's schmaltz.
And what he doesn't look is French.
So Bubba's coming off the bench.

The Democratic base can't wait
To listen to their Bill orate
And prove that he is still a mensh.
They welcome Bubba off the bench.

He is their knight who feels their pain—
An empathetic Charlemagne.
And they've forgiven him that wench.
So Bubba's coming off the bench.

A Sign of Things to Come

As I write, several days before the election, Congress's last-minute effort to enact the 9/11 Commission's recommendations appears to have stalled, largely because of disagreement over the scope of budgetary authority that the new National Intelligence Director should have—a question of passionate interest to the bureaucrats in and around Washington but likely to have little impact on civil liberties. Virtually lost in the debates, however, was the fact that the House bill would have radically rewritten immigration law to return us to the McCarthy era. That almost no one voiced concern about this aspect of the law suggests that no matter who wins the presidential election, those who care about civil liberties will have to redouble their efforts. Antiterrorism

(Continued on Page 28)

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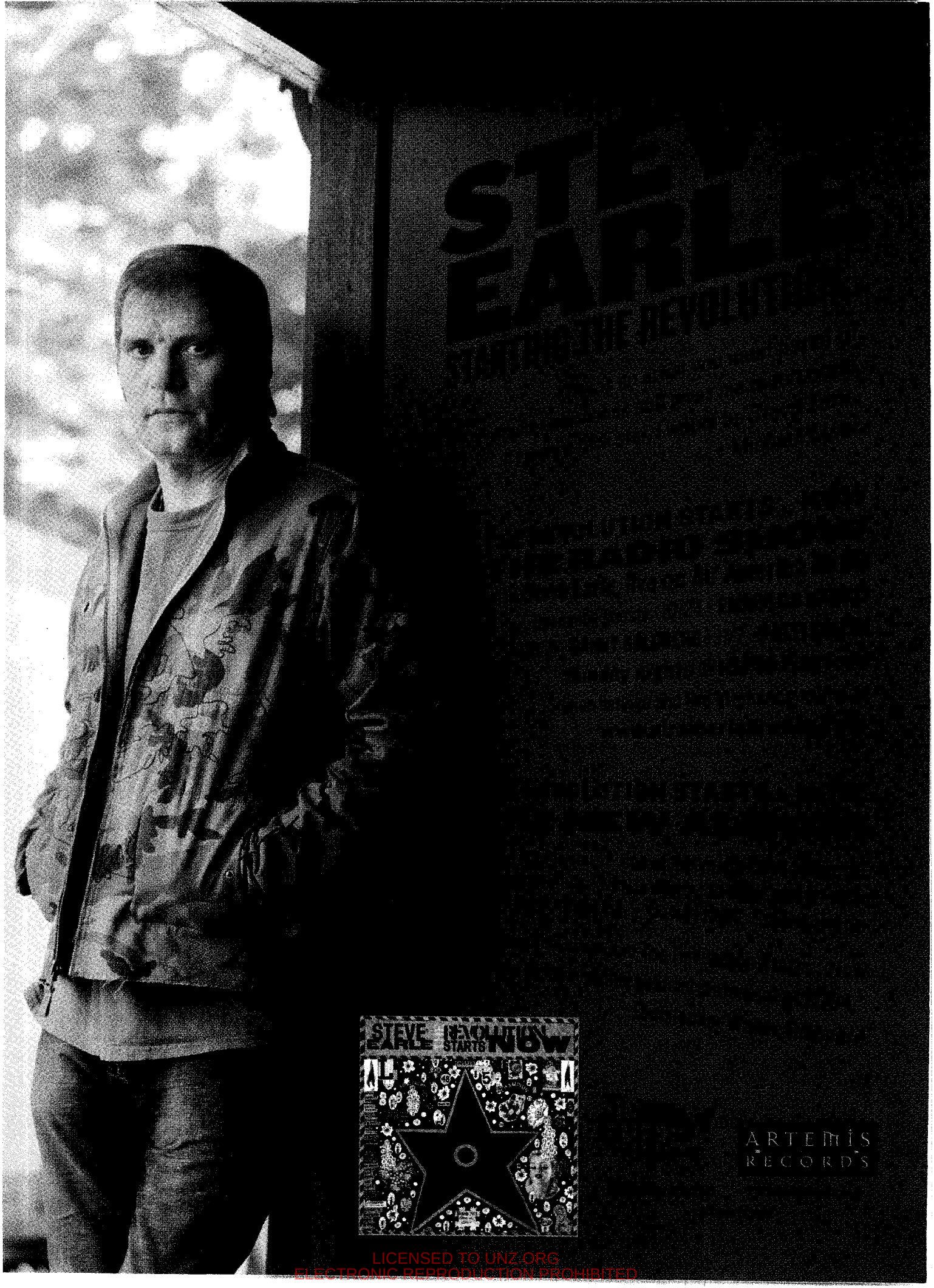

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Looking Tough

As the final week of the campaign season expires (this column goes to press on October 27), George W. Bush has boiled his one-theme campaign message down to a few phrases: He is "strong" and will "stay the course," but Senator John Kerry has a "record of weakness" and will "cut and run" in the face of terrorism. In these same days, a remarkable series by Tim Golden in the *New York Times* has given us one more look into what Bush's policy has meant in practice. Golden's subject is the creation of the military commissions to try the prisoners being held in Guantánamo. A small, tightly knit cabal of right-wing lawyers led by Vice President Cheney and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld conspired in secret (even the President's National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, and Secretary of State Colin Powell were kept in the dark) to rewrite the laws of the United States (the Constitution) and the world (mainly the Geneva Conventions) to license a free hand in interrogating the Guantánamo prisoners.

After the President had made the innovation public, Cheney stated, "We think it guarantees that we'll have the kind of treatment of these individuals that we believe they deserve." What they deserved, as it has turned out, was to be tortured: stripped naked, beaten, kept sleepless, threatened with dogs. Those practices—all but the beatings secretly licensed by Rumsfeld—were aimed at acquiring information needed to prosecute the "war on terror."

But no proceedings were brought. An unexpected problem arose. The prisoners neither possessed the desired information nor had committed the offenses for which the system of drumhead justice had been instituted. One commander of Guantánamo, Maj. Gen. Michael Dunlavey, even went to Afghanistan to complain that he was being provided with the wrong prisoners. "General, please shut up and go home," he was told, according to an officer familiar with the mission.

Resolve had been shown, the Constitution had been circumnavigated, international law had been set aside, the prisoners had been abused, the course had been stayed, but the results were nil. So far, not a single inmate of Guantánamo has been brought before a commission, much less convicted.

Golden's story in fact fits into a pattern. Here at home, Attorney General Ashcroft has overseen the detention of some 5,000 people on suspicion of terrorism. But, as David Cole has reminded us in this magazine, not one has been successfully convicted of terrorism—the only conviction obtained having been thrown out by a federal judge in Detroit.

At Abu Ghraib, the story was the same. The torture there included the scenes of degradation and depravity made known in the infamous photographs taken by the torturers, but so far no one has suggested that information of value was thereby obtained. According to military estimates, up to 80 percent of the inmates were innocent even of involvement with the resistance movement.

The case of Yaser Hamdi, one of the few American citizens labeled an "enemy combatant" and locked away incommunicado in a Navy brig and stripped of all rights, produced the same result. As soon as the Supreme Court ordered that he had to be given judicial recourse, the Administration released him and packed him off to Saudi Arabia. No charges were brought, and none, of course, proven. Pushed to show its cards, the Administration folded. Hamdi is merely barred by agreement with Saudi Arabia from leaving that country for five years. This is what "staying the course" has come down to in his case. (In Saudi Arabia, he is as invisible as he was in the American brig.)

The point is not—heaven forbid!—that if actual terrorists had been present among the Guantánamo population, or the Ashcroft 5,000, or the prisoners of Abu Ghraib, or the "enemy combatants," then torture would be justified. It is that the endeavor cited by the President as the *raison d'être* of his Administration, and therefore of his claim to a second term—protecting the United States against terrorists—is hollow in its own terms. Even Bush's abuses are frauds—not the abuses themselves, of course, which are all too revoltingly real, but the ends in whose name they are carried out.

The generalization seems to apply not just to the judicial abuses but to the entire "war on terror." We now know—in another recent discovery by the *Times*—that the Bush Administration permitted 380 tons of high explosives to be looted from a bunker in Iraq. Last year, we learned that Iraq's nuclear repositories had been likewise left unguarded and likewise looted. But it's too late in the day to be surprised by any of these discoveries. For what was the Iraq war itself but a gigantic diversion from the threat of Al Qaeda—a pursuit of the double mirage of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and Iraqi collaboration with Al Qaeda? In Iraq as in Guantánamo, the Administration took extreme measures to meet nonexistent threats. Even the war in Afghanistan, though now approved on all sides, missed its designated target. It's true that overthrowing the Taliban government there was a serious blow to its partner, Osama bin Laden. Yet it is a fact not to be forgotten that the Taliban was not the prime objective of the military campaign; bin Laden was, and bin Laden got away.

Across the board, from Guantánamo to Baghdad, it turns out that this Administration has done things (lock up and torment thousands, overthrow states) not because doing them advanced the cause but because it *could do them*.

But then why do them? A clue is offered in a comment by Timothy Flanigan, former deputy White House counsel, who commented that the establishment of the useless military commissions "communicated the message that we were at war, that this was not going to be business as usual." As I write, the President is communicating that message with a vengeance. He hopes thereby to win a second term. But he lies. For "communicating," not accomplishing, seems to have been the aim all along.

We arrive at a radical but inescapable conclusion. The Administration has wanted above all not to *be* strong but to *look* strong. The actuality of strength has been sacrificed to the appearance. Sometimes, these procedures have been called "incompetent," but this misses the point. For as appearances, the actions have been brilliant. They may win George W. Bush a second term. Unless, reader, by the time you read this, you have voted him out of office.

Jonathan Schell is the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at The Nation Institute.

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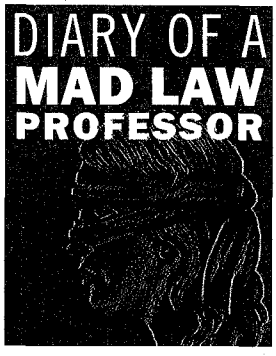
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Voting Blocks



Six more days till the election. As of this writing (October 27), nothing is certain. The election polls are bouncing around like yo-yos. Clinton is back on the campaign trail, and we are reminded of what a luxury it was when all we had to worry about was Monica-gate, but the surplus was in the billions.

Politicians are running around and around the swing states, chasing those last slippery undecideds. According to some analysts, Bush enjoys a sudden uptick in popularity among black voters. That threw many for a loop, until it was explained that Republicans have been working black churches, bastions of social if not political conservatism, for their opposition to gay marriage. Now 18 percent of African-Americans seem to fear same-sex matrimony more than the doctrine of pre-emptive war or having their vote not counted. Jesse Jackson recently asked a group of black parishioners how many of their members had been personally confronted by some aspect of the crisis in affordable housing, or underemployment, or police corruption, or record rates of imprisonment, or the war in Iraq. Every hand in the room went up. Then he asked how many had a relative intending to marry someone of the same sex. There was not a single hand. Yet how completely has the latter displaced the former in our national debate. The gay marriage amendment seems to have become the Willie Horton of this election.

Then too, maybe Bush's popularity among African-American voters has risen because he publicly denounced the 1857 decision of *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, in which decision Justice Taney proclaimed that black people had no rights that whites were bound to respect. Perhaps that good news—some of us had been wondering—swayed hearts and minds in the black community: Bush opposes slavery! We are a forgiving people. Better late than never. Surely it would be much too cynical to listen to those who have said that Bush's reference to *Dred Scott* was a mere sop to the antiabortion wing of his constituency—that it was a coded reference to the putative right of fetal personhood to which he was referring. Surely he would just openly state his disagreement with *Roe v. Wade*—he's already eliminated access to abortion for women posted overseas in the military, even if they want to pay for it themselves. Surely he would simply state his intention to appoint a Supreme Court that would overturn a woman's right to choose rather than exploiting one of the unhappiest moments in our racial and juridical history. Surely.

But, alas, since the Administration is notorious for its perpetual obliqueness, the rumor mill is ablaze with hypotheses about what rights would look like for anyone, born or unborn, under a second Bush Administration. My favorite wakeup-without-coffee is the speculation that Clarence Thomas would be the next Chief Justice, when Rehnquist steps down. Bush has said that Thomas and Antonin Scalia would be the model for any appointments he might make. Scalia, the one who believes that capital punishment is OK, because as a believing Christian, there's always the afterlife. Thomas, on the other hand, has said very little at all since ascending to the bench, and has written relatively few opinions. The ones he has penned, often as a far-right dissenter, rank him as the most conservative Justice of the last hundred years, but that will probably mean less in the coming political machinations than that he has been taciturn and meanspirited, traits that Bush seems to admire and reward.

Beyond that, there's the open question about whom a second-term Bush would nominate to fill the vacancies sure to occur in the next four years. For a long time, the conventional wisdom was that White House counsel Alberto Gonzales would be put forward as the first Hispanic Justice. However, his little memo condoning the use of torture and brushing aside concerns about the Geneva Conventions as "quaint" ought to disqualify him, if there is anything like justice or sanity left. Perhaps not. My guess is that there will be a series of stealth nominations, some roster of quietly sinister candidates of whom no one has ever heard.

What's at stake for the long term includes a range of challenges to the Patriot Act. The power to conduct secret, warrantless searches of homes and computers. The ability to detain people without charge and for indefinite periods of time. The right to protest in public places. In addition, it seems certain that a large number of voting-rights cases will work their way up to the Supreme Court. The answers to questions about everything from redistricting to electoral oversight will determine our future for decades to come.

Aside from voting, the purview of government accountability generally will be a major issue. Awarding no-bid contracts to insider-connected companies like Halliburton. Media concentration. Limits on cruel and seemingly ever more unusual forms of punishment. Preservation of national parks and wildlife refuges.

Government ability to regulate public health and safety are also on the line: The ability of citizens to sue federally regulated health plans. Capital punishment. Gun control. Immunity of gun manufacturers from suit. Access to the morning-after pill. Immigration policy.

All this hangs in the balance, because Bush favors strict constructionists and the kinds of true-blue believers in original intent who will upend anything they deem not within the ken of the Founding Fathers' intent. Some, like Robert Bork, interrogate the legitimacy of much of the Bill of Rights. Others, like Scalia, have openly questioned the legitimacy of the entire line of civil rights cases that began with *Brown v. Board of Education* and have provided the underpinning for protection from bias for women, the disabled and the elderly. If Bush wins and Congress remains a Republican stronghold, I fear it won't be long before we all end up like the benighted creatures in Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Didn't the Constitution say all of us were equal? Whenever did that little addendum whisper its way in—"but some are more equal than others"? ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

Faith-based Journalism: The Refs Work Themselves

Even though we've lived with it for more than thirty years now, it's hard not to marvel at the effectiveness of the right's campaign to intimidate, cajole and complain their way into favorable treatment from the mainstream media for their candidates and causes. What's so interesting is that they no longer even bother to argue the merits of their case in normative terms. Rather, they operate on the basis of a kind of faith-based definition of news, in which such niceties as facts and evidence play no role. And it works.

The ideology of the faith-based news was nicely stated by Bush senior media adviser Mark McKinnon to reporter Ron Suskind, "You think he's an idiot, don't you?... all of you do, up and down the West Coast, the East Coast, a few blocks in southern Manhattan called Wall Street. Let me clue you in. We don't care. You see, you're outnumbered 2 to 1 by folks in the big, wide middle of America, busy working people who don't read the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* or the *LA Times*. And you know what they like? They like the way he walks and the way he points, the way he exudes confidence. They have faith in him. And when you attack him for his malaprops, his jumbled syntax, it's good for us. Because you know what those folks don't like? They don't like you!"

Speaking to *Salon*'s Eric Boehlert, *New York Times* executive editor Bill Keller admitted, "We're puzzled over what seems to be a more intense antipathy [from] this White House, especially since the campaign heated up." Keller said he could "only speculate, but some of it may be that they think whacking a big newspaper with 'New York' in its name plays well with the conservative base. Perhaps they think if they beat up on us we'll go soft on them." What Keller misses is that the hostility so evident among right-wingers is—at least for the intelligent among them—a put-up job. When Republican consultants "work the refs" they don't need to believe their own charges. They only need to pretend to believe them long enough to insure the following kinds of actions on the part of the media:

§ Just as it had done following the Cheney-Edwards debate, after the third presidential debate, ABC News disgraced itself by publishing a poll its own journalists could not have believed. The respondents to their instant poll skewed Republican, 38 to 30, despite the fact—known quite well to the folks at ABC—that the past two elections have seen a 39-to-35 turnout favoring Democrats. ABC therefore showed a tie, when all the honest polls that followed demonstrated a strong win for Kerry. Had ABC attempted to do such a thing to the disadvantage of the Republicans, there would have been hell to pay—on Fox, on Drudge, on Rush, in the *Wall Street Journal* editorial pages and across the Murdoch empire. But because they were screwing the Democrats—twice—it was just business as usual.

§ Commenting on the same debate, NBC offered up Andrea Mitchell, who, in response to a question on the future of Social Security that criticized Alan Greenspan, proceeded to attack Kerry for alleged demagogy. Unfortunately, neither she nor NBC thought it relevant to inform viewers that Ms. Mitchell is also Mrs. Greenspan. Can there be a clearer, more precise illustration of a genuine conflict of interest? One can barely even imagine what fresh hell the MSNBC switchboard operators would have been forced to experience had the Bush campaign been the victim of so blatant a violation of journalistic ethics. (Meanwhile, what was up with MSNBC following the debate with four pro-Bush pundits out of five?)

§ In the aftermath of the same debate, as the blog "Media Matters" noted, "Kerry's accurate and respectful reference to Mary Cheney's sexuality" received four times as much punditocracy attention as Bush's inaccurate denial that he had ever said he wasn't worried about Osama bin Laden.

§ Issues, shmissues: Just as it did four years ago, the Bush campaign is determined to ignore issues whenever possible—lest the party's extremism become the subject of discussion—and focus instead on "character" and "values." Following the influential example of the authors of ABC's *The Note*—which goes so far as to mock *Times* editorial writers for getting "super excited about the substance of the VP debate"—CNN's commentators played into the Bush playbook by mocking the very idea that a presidential candidate might communicate something about his policies in a presidential debate. Candy Crowley complained of being forced to sit through "a bit of a wonk fest." She was followed by Jeff Greenfield, who belied on television his reputation for brains by grumbling, Rush Limbaugh–style, "This was the least satisfying debate, the most drenched in wonkery."

The net result of the so-called liberal media's abdication of its constitutional role—together with an active campaign of deception by the right-wing media, on Fox and elsewhere—is a nation voting in profound ignorance of what its votes will mean. As a recent study by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes demonstrates, even after the final report of Charles Duelfer, demonstrating the complete absence of any WMD program in Iraq, 72 percent of Bush supporters operate in ignorance, and believe Iraq had actual WMD (47 percent) or a major development program (25 percent). No less disturbing, 75 percent of Bush supporters believe Iraq was providing significant support to Al Qaeda, and 63 percent are under the impression that we have discovered evidence to support that contention. A mere 31 percent of Bush supporters are aware that most of the world continues to oppose the US invasion of Iraq, with 42 percent assuming an evenly divided global opinion and more than a quarter believing that the rest of the planet approves.

It's hard to argue that democracy can be said to be functioning under these circumstances; and it's even harder to defend the role of the American media in upholding a respect for fact over "faith." But given his record of almost unprecedented incompetence, ideological fanaticism, mendacity and corruption, faith over reality represents Bush's only chance. ■

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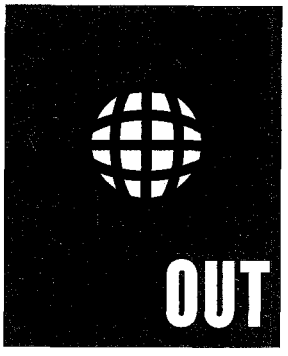
NAOMI KLEIN

Carlyle Covers Up

Less than twenty-four hours after *The Nation* disclosed that former Secretary of State James Baker and the Carlyle Group were involved in a secret deal to profit from Iraq's debt to Kuwait, NBC was reporting that the deal was "dead." At *The Nation*, we started to get calls congratulating us on costing the Carlyle Group $1 billion, the sum the company would have received in an investment from the government of Kuwait in exchange for helping to extract $27 billion of unpaid debts from Iraq.



We were flattered (sort of), until we realized that Carlyle had just pulled off a major public relations coup. When the story broke, the notoriously secretive merchant bank needed to find a way to avoid a full-blown political scandal. It chose a bold tactic: In the face of overwhelming evidence of a glaring conflict of interest between Baker's stake in Carlyle and his post as George W. Bush's special envoy on Iraq's debt, Carlyle simply denied everything. The company issued a statement saying that it does not want to be involved in the Kuwait deal "in any way, shape or form and will not invest any money raised by the Consortium's efforts" and, furthermore, that "Carlyle was never a member of the Consortium." A spokesperson told the *Financial Times* that Carlyle had pulled out as soon as James Baker was appointed debt envoy, because his new political post made Carlyle's involvement "unsuitable." Mysteriously, there was no paper trail—just Carlyle's word that it had informed its business partners "orally."

You have to hand it to them: It was gutsy. In the leaked business proposal from the consortium to the Kuwaiti government—submitted almost two months after Baker's appointment—the Carlyle Group is named no fewer than forty-seven times; it is listed first among the companies involved in the consortium; and its partner James Baker is mentioned by name at least eleven times. In interviews, other consortium members, including Madeleine Albright's consulting firm, the Albright Group, confirmed that Carlyle was still involved, as did the office of the Prime Minister of Kuwait. Shahameen Sheikh, the consortium's CEO, told me that when Baker was named envoy in December, Carlyle was "very clear with us that they wanted to restrict their role to fund managers," but she said the firm was very much still a part of the deal.

That was exactly what Carlyle spokesman Christopher Ullman had told me. He also admitted that Carlyle would land a $1 billion investment if the proposal was accepted. After I reported these facts, Ullman even called to thank me for quoting him accurately.

So when I heard about Carlyle's about-face, I called Ullman to see what was up. I felt like I was talking to one of the brainwashed characters in *The Manchurian Candidate*, the Jonathan Demme remake about a Carlyle-esque company that conspires to put a mind-controlled candidate in the Oval Office. "We learned today that we did not even join the consortium," Ullman told me, drone-like. "When I spoke to you yesterday, I did not know that."

Amazingly, it worked. The story—which made front-page news around the world—vanished almost as soon as it had appeared in the press at home. The *New York Times* has not printed a word about Baker's conflict, despite the fact that when Baker was first appointed envoy, it published an editorial calling on him to resign from Carlyle in order to "perform honorably in his new public job." The Kerry campaign has been equally silent, apparently for fear that any criticism would boomerang onto the Democrats because of Albright. This was Carlyle's stroke of genius: When Baker was appointed, the consortium recruited Albright to front the deal; when they got caught, Carlyle denied all involvement in this "unsuitable" activity and left a prominent Democrat holding the bag.

As the story disappeared under Carlyle's spell, it was as if the entire US media had been implanted with Manchurian memory chips. Here was hard evidence that the Carlyle Group—the "ex-Presidents' club," run so much like a secret society that Charles Lewis of the Center for Public Integrity once described researching the firm as "shadowboxing with a ghost"—had participated in a scheme to use Baker to undermine US policy, possibly in violation of multiple conflict-of-interest regulations, including criminal statutes. Yet Carlyle was slipping out of reach once again.

Crucially, the central question remains unanswered by the White House: Have James Baker's business interests compromised his performance as debt envoy? That question does not go away simply because $1 billion will stay in the coffers of a wealthy oil emirate rather than in a Carlyle equity fund. The week after losing the deal, Carlyle handed a record-breaking $6.6 billion payout to investors. "It's the best 18 months we ever had," boasted Carlyle chief investment officer Bill Conway to the *Financial Times*. "We made money and we made it fast."

In Iraq, the last eighteen months have been markedly worse, and the stakes for Baker's job performance there are considerably higher. This was underlined on October 13, when Iraq's health ministry issued a harrowing report on its post-invasion health crisis, including outbreaks of typhoid and tuberculosis and soaring child and mother mortality rates. A week after the report came out, Iraq paid out another $195 million for war reparation debts, mostly to Kuwait. Meanwhile, the State Department announced that $3.5 billion for water, sanitation and electricity projects was being shifted to security in Iraq, claiming that, according to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, debt relief is on the way.

Is it? In fact, Iraq is being plunged deeper into debt, with $836 million in new loans and grants now flowing from the IMF and the World Bank. Meanwhile, Baker has not managed to get a single country to commit to eradicating Iraq's debts. Iraq's creditors know that while Baker was asking them to show forgiveness, his company was offering Kuwait a special side deal to push Iraq to pay up. It's not the kind of news that tends to generate generosity and good will. And the timing couldn't be worse: The Paris Club is about to meet to hash out a final deal on Iraq's debt.

But that doesn't happen until November 12. And if 2000 is any indication, by then Baker could be on to bigger deals. Look out for him in swing states, if another election needs stealing. ■

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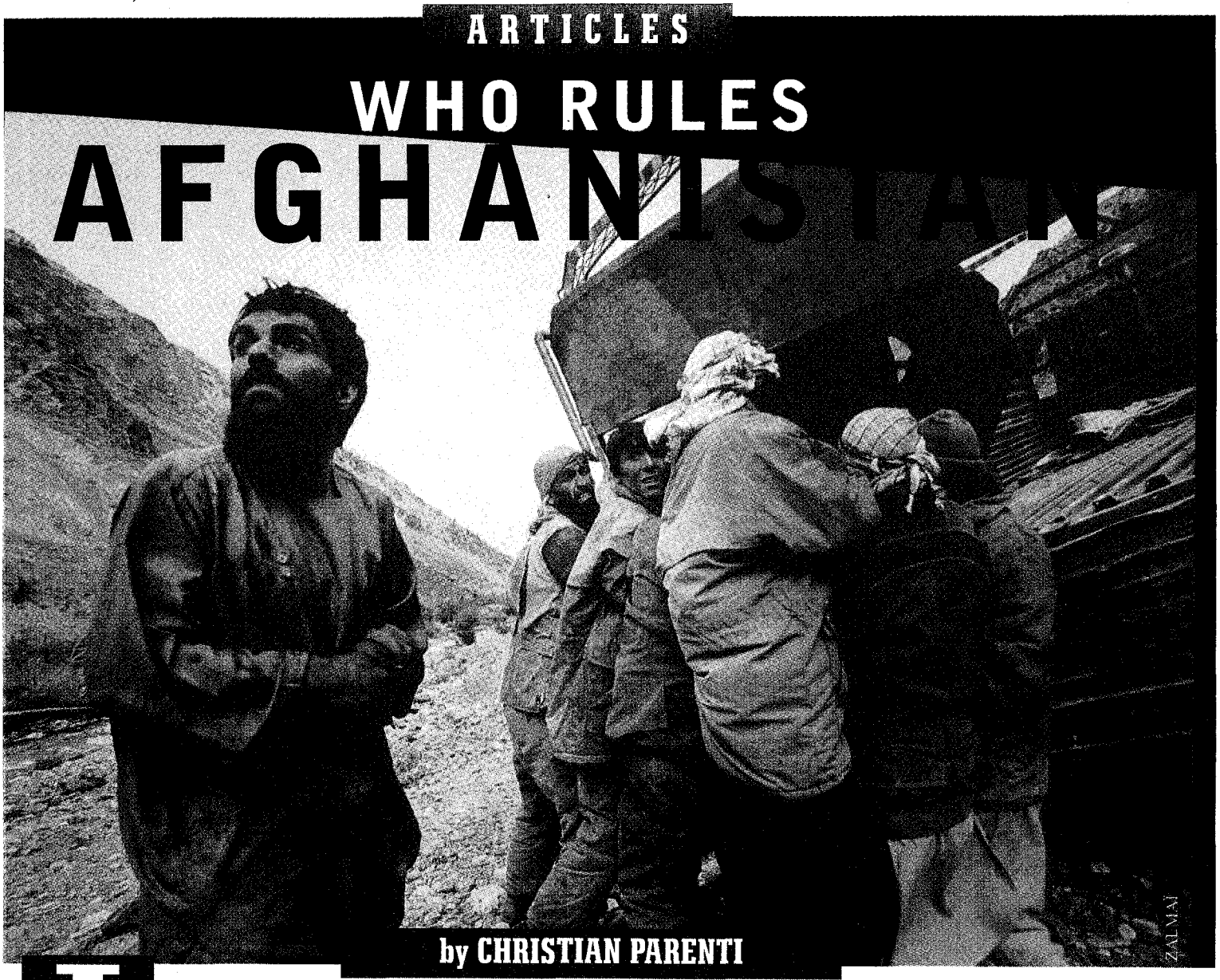
ARTICLES

WHO RULES AFGHANISTAN



by CHRISTIAN PARENTI

It is noon in northern Afghanistan, Balkh province. The autumn sky is empty and bright. A tough 60-year-old farmer named Mamood sits for an interview in the shade of a tree. Surrounding us in all directions are fields of marijuana on the verge of harvest. The plants are tall, thick and fragrant, their dark green flowers glistening with potent oils.

Soon the crop will be cut, dried and beaten against linen in small rooms to extract the resin that makes hashish. It's dirty work that falls primarily to women and children. The rooms fill with dust; asthma is a common occupational hazard. In a month the farmers will sow these same fields with opium poppy. After each crop come the marauding gunmen who collect "taxes" of 20 percent on the harvest.

"In the past few weeks they've taken money, some vehicles and kidnapped a girl," says Mamood. "They work for the commanders. They take whatever they want and they will kill you if you try and stop them. When you hear 'commander' just think 'thief' or 'murderer.' That is all they are."

Mamood is not talking about the Taliban or Al Qaeda but rather about Afghanistan's mujahedeen warlords, or *jangsalaran* in Dari. These men are America's allies, central players in the international effort to rebuild a state in the world's third-poorest country.

These are the same men who killed 40,000–50,000 civilians during their factional fighting in Kabul between 1992 and 1994. Under their rule chaos reigned in much of the countryside: Militias raped, plundered and destroyed the economy. At times there were between ten and fourteen separate currencies circulating, each printed by a different commander. Whole villages fled; trade and agriculture broke down. As John Sifton of Human Rights Watch puts it, "What these guys did made Sarajevo look like kindergarten."

Now, instead of being treated as part of the problem and hunted down, the *jangsalaran* are being folded into government and given new power and legitimacy by the UN and the US-backed government of Hamid Karzai. The "commanders" now use titles like "security chief," "governor," "minister" or even "presidential candidate." International administrators justify the political inclusion of these mujahedeen commanders as "the price of peace."

Indeed, a return to the open factional warfare of the early

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1990s is unlikely. But neither is Afghanistan headed toward real peace and prosperity. Instead, this country of 20–25 million inhabitants is an embryonic narco-mafia state, where politics rely on paramilitary networks engaged in everything from poppy farming, heroin processing and vote rigging to extortion and the commercial smuggling of commodities like electronics and auto parts. And while the Western pundit class applauds the recent Afghan elections, the people here suffer renewed exploitation at the hands of America's local partners.

Back under the tree in the marijuana fields, Mamood is joined by other farmers, who recount a litany of depredations.

"A few weeks ago I had two motorcycles stolen," says Saja Hudin, who also lives and farms in this rural community two hours from Mazar-i-Sharif. "I had a guest and we were going to work some of my land near Kudbarq. Two gunmen stopped us. I thought they were security or I would have tried to escape. They took both motorcycles and all my money. I was holding 12,000 afghani for a cousin. One of the men wanted to kill us, the other stopped him. Now I am in debt." Hudin says that one of the perpetrators was the nephew of a local commander, Shafi Dewana.

The boom in drug crops, particularly opium poppy, has put a new premium on Afghanistan's limited arable land.

"*Dewana* means crazy," says another man in English.

Saja Hudin reported the theft to the authorities—but in Balkh province people like Crazy Shafi *are* the authorities. The new Karzai-appointed governor is Mohammed Atta, a powerful warlord and commander of the Seventh Corps of what UN disarmament experts politely refer to as "Afghan Military Forces." These are the private armies that now have government money and sometimes uniforms but are not part of the US-trained Afghan National Army. Crazy Shafi is one of Mohammed Atta's deputies.

"We had an audience with Governor Atta. I told him about the robbery," says Saja Hudin. "He said he'd tell Shafi to give back the motorcycles, but when I left, Crazy Shafi found me and threatened to kill me if I went back to the governor." The farmers explain that Shafi does not control this immediate area but holds sway along the road that leads to Mazar-i-Sharif.

"A month ago Crazy Shafi even took a girl who traveled through his area," says Saja Hudin. In a moment of naïveté I suggest to my driver and interpreter that we go find and interview Crazy Shafi.

"No," says the farmer Mamood. "He is really crazy."

"Yeah, go visit him and he will fuck all of you," says a farmer to peels of laughter from the visibly nervous crew of men under the tree. Unconvinced, I press the point.

"No! Are you crazy?" says my driver, Mobin, in English. "He will steal my car. Why do you think they call him crazy?" Then I realize it's a ridiculous proposal.

Back in Mazar, I track down a local translator with an NGO, who tells me more about the kidnapped girl. The young man, who recently returned from exile in Pakistan and has Western sensibilities, had a tryst with the woman. She was "modern" like him, a free spirit—"not a prostitute," he says, "but she had been with some men." He won't tell me her name.

Crazy Shafi saw the young woman as fair game. So he kidnapped her and raped and beat her for two days. Once released, she disappeared.

"Maybe she is in Uzbekistan or Pakistan," says the young translator. "Nobody knows." Later in the middle of a somewhat formal dinner with some of his colleagues, the young man leans over to me and flips open his cell phone. On the screen is the photo of the young woman, smiling, unveiled, looking over her shoulder. "That's the girl," he says in a depressed, almost drunken tone.

Commanders like Crazy Shafi do not restrict themselves to motorcycles, women and taxation. They also intimidate journalists, kidnap people for ransom and, according to rural Afghans whom I interviewed and to the Kabul-based Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit, are engaged in widespread land seizures.

Some stolen plots belonged to refugees who had fled Afghanistan; others were traditional commons used by villages to pasture animals and gather firewood. The boom in drug crops, particularly opium poppy, has put a new premium on Afghanistan's limited arable land. "If you cannot defend your land, they will take it," explains Mamood.

Mazar-i-Sharif sits on a flat plain surrounded by distant mountains. It is an ugly, sprawling town, but it is filled with white doves, called *kaftar*. The doves congregate at the tomb of Hazrat Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Mohammed. People here say that any pigeon of a different hue will turn white within forty days of being set free in Mazar-i-Sharif. And indeed, there are no gray or even speckled pigeons here.

Many of the people who move to Mazar are not so easily transformed. As a prelude to becoming governor here, the warlord Mohammed Atta had his men lay siege to the home and offices of a rival, the provincial security chief Gen. Mohammed Akram Khakrizwal, who is almost universally acknowledged to be an honest man committed to the rule of law. Police loyal to Khakrizwal were driven away, and an armed standoff ensued for the next twenty days.

During the siege, Khakrizwal was resupplied with food and water by the small garrison of British troops stationed here, but the foreign soldiers were unable or unwilling to intervene further. Eventually some accommodation was reached and Mohammed Atta was appointed governor of Balkh province.

Now back on the job, the barrel-chested, thickly bearded Pashtun General Khakrizwal—in charge of a largely Tajik and Uzbek area—describes the real and very imperfect nature of his work: "We have security here in Mazar, but in the districts we have only 10 percent control. There are many serious crimes—murder, drug trafficking—but even more important, there are ethnic tensions between Pashtuns, Tajiks and Uzbeks as well as

Christian Parenti is the author of The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq *(New Press) and a visiting fellow at CUNY's Center for Place, Culture and Politics.* *Research support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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land and water conflicts. We do our best to stop any violence between these groups and between the political parties." The parties he refers to are Abdul Rashid Dostum's Jumbish and Atta's wing of Jamiat, the party once led by the lionized but actually quite vicious Ahmed Shah Massoud.

"Only some of the police are loyal to me," continues the general. "We lack the equipment we need, but I am trying to rebuild my forces." As for the standoff with Atta, the chief is simultaneously blunt and diplomatic. "Atta wants power. Now he is my boss." The general's flat smile says: Welcome to Afghanistan.

Mohammed Atta's offices are considerably more lavish than General Khakrizwal's. The mood inside this walled compound is one of intimidating leisure. Among the men waiting to meet Atta is a bohemian-looking Afghan film director named Wakil Negbin. He claims to have made the only Afghan action flick in years.

Atta's inner offices are spacious, lined with fine red Persian carpets and furnished with long beige couches and several awkwardly futuristic overstuffed lounge chairs. The governor is tall and lean, with closely cropped hair and beard. He wears a superb black business suit and gold Rolex, but the clothes seem to make him uncomfortable: he's still getting used to his new persona. We are served tea and pistachio nuts. Armed men guard the doors.

I ask Governor Atta about the charges that his deputies, like Crazy Shafi, are pillaging the countryside, involved in the drug trade and refusing the UN's requests to disarm.

"I have no military forces anymore; I am just the governor," says Atta, staring at me blankly. "My concerns now are reconstruction and security, building schools and clinics." In fact, it's well-known that Atta is still in command of his troops and that he refuses to demobilize according to the UN-set schedule. And, like most governors, he keeps most of the taxes he collects.

As for his recent military clashes with his rival Dostum: "We have had our disagreements. Dostum is very aggressive, and when I was commander of Seventh Corps I had to defend my people when he attacked."

Was Atta's siege of Gen. Akram Khakrizwal's offices also a defensive move? "What happened there," says Atta in a tone of feigned apology, "was that some of Akram's men were caught smuggling narcotics. So we had to arrest them and fire some of the police. But that incident was really very minor."

As we talk, a dapper Afghan journalist enters and without a word starts shooting video on an ancient TV camera. The man has a finely sculpted goatee, wears a brown velvet Nehru jacket, creased black slacks and spotless designer shoes. After a few minutes he leaves. The interview goes on for another hour.

That night when Balkh state TV—the only channel available in Mazar—starts its three-hour nightly broadcast, the dandy journalist with the goatee and funky jacket appears behind a desk reading the news. Top item: Governor Atta's schedule. Prominently featured: Governor Atta's "cordial meeting" with a journalist from "an important American magazine." The newsreader explains, "The two discussed the progress of reconstruction in Balkh and the importance of Governor Atta's work." My translator is also named as being in attendance. The broadcast has the creepy, stilted feel of old-school dictatorship. We leave Mazar at dawn.

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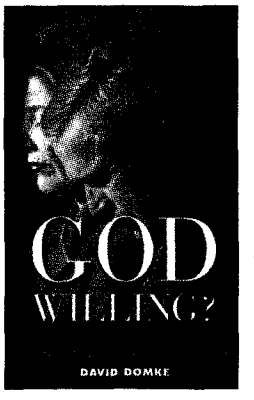

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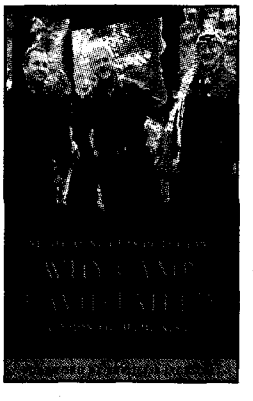

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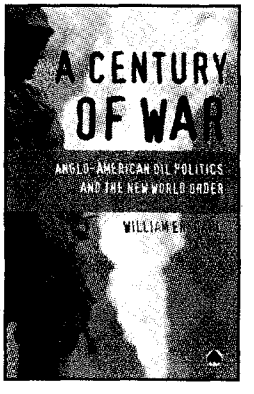

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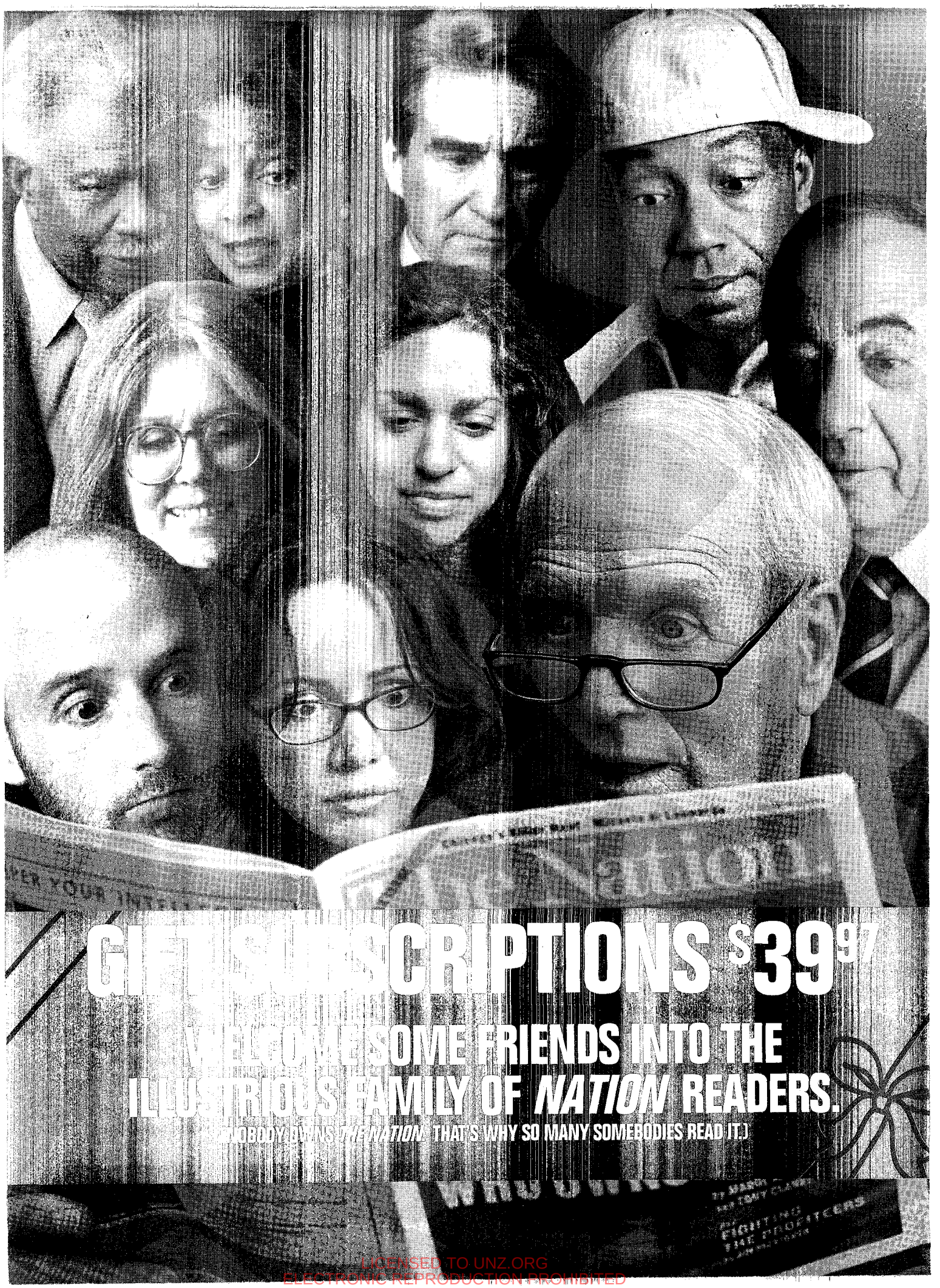
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Back in Kabul, the presidential elections are approaching. At 1:30 AM, the night before the vote, I am awakened by a huge and close blast. The photographer Teru Kuwayama and I run out to investigate. The dark streets are empty except for packs of feral dogs. A dust storm has risen from the rubble of the city's largely destroyed west side. Soon we find the source of the explosion: Two rockets have hit our immediate neighborhood, exploding above a UN media compound. There are no casualties, but the US troops guarding the area are jumpy. "Put the fucking camera down!" shouts a soldier from behind some floodlights. We go back to bed.

The next day more violence is expected, but none materializes. Instead of tragedy, the vote plays out as farce. By late afternoon, it is clear that there is massive vote fraud under way. Most of Karzai's fourteen opponents are calling for a boycott and suspension of elections. Journalists are running back and forth across town to find the most egregious technical errors and blatant fraud. The crisis is getting so bad that President Karzai calls a restricted, invitation-only press conference.

Officially the Taliban are a big problem, but security experts privately acknowledge that they are isolated and under pressure.

I am rolling with some scruffy American photographers. We are not on Karzai's list, which seems to include no more than a dozen news organizations. But soon we are joined by other journalists all demanding to get in. Finally the press officer relents and we are slowly passed through layer upon layer of DynCorp security guards and across the desolate gardens of the classy but run-down Afghan presidential palace, which looks like an old European hotel. In a small, wood-paneled conference room we meet Karzai.

"The commission will look into all of these problems, but I am sure the vote was free," says the cloaked and *karakol*-wearing Karzai after a few jokes and greetings.

Throughout the rather intimate press conference, Karzai invokes the image of "a poor, hungry, cold Afghan woman waiting to vote. She cannot be intimidated." Questions are sparse. Karzai seems like a nervous jollier, trying to play down the election debacle with jokes about Lise Doucet from the BBC. "Where is she with her sharp questions? I am ready." He repeatedly asks for questions from "my friend Ahmed Rashid." The distinguished Pakistani journalist has one query but declines to respond to the president's further cajoling.

Finally I am called on. Citing specific examples, I ask about allegations that Karzai's campaign has used fraud and intimidation—in short, warlord tactics. The president grows angry. "What report? Human Rights Watch? They do not understand Afghan culture. Tribal culture, it is very democratic. Tribal elders cannot be intimidated. They do not know what is really going on. The tribal elders from Khost were just here. They signed a document saying everything is OK."

The UN, which essentially ran the elections, likewise does its best to calm the situation with deft spin and dulcet tones from its smoothly effective spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva. "I am not just trying to be some happy guy. I admit there are problems. But there are also genuine efforts to sort this out. Let's give it some time," he says, stopping politely on the way out of the crisis meeting, his hand holding my shoulder as if we were old friends. Before long, the crisis is being beamed back at us by the international media as a matter of "a few glitches" or "questions about ink."

Karzai insists that democracy and freedom are winning in Afghanistan. He denies that he will buy off his opponents and the warlords with cabinet posts, governorships and ministries. Never mind that this is already his government's modus operandi.

Given current dynamics, Afghanistan will remain a weak and fragmented state, easily controlled by outside powers, its economy broken, its common people mercilessly exploited, suffering from a low-simmering but ineffective insurgency. One place to see this is unfolding is on the border with Pakistan.

The road from Kabul east to Jalalabad is an abysmally rutted dirt track that ascends and descends in switchbacks up high mountains, with thousand-foot drops at the road's edge, then passes down through some parched valleys into a desert strewn with huge boulders. The trip takes a full day. Roadside bombs are not uncommon here: Numerous NGO workers and journalists have been killed on this stretch of road in the past year.

This is Nangarhar province, which juts like a peninsula into Pakistan and contains the infamous Al Qaeda stronghold of the Tora Bora mountain range. Most of the province's districts are classified as no-go areas for internationals. All the NGOs have left. The place is crawling with US Special Forces, out hunting. When their convoys of Humvees and white Toyota trucks lurch past on the dusty back roads, they look like landlocked pirates, wearing costumes of mismatched camouflage, Afghan scarves, beards and assorted bush hats.

A security expert in Jalalabad tells me that there's been at least one IED attack every day for a month, and that the local US garrison, or Provincial Reconstruction Team, was recently besieged for five hours straight. Even so, US casualties around here have remained fairly light.

Officially the Taliban are a big problem, but in private, security experts acknowledge that the Taliban and their allies are isolated and under pressure from both US troops in Afghanistan and Pakistani forces across the border. Once backed by the Pakistani state, Al Qaeda and the Taliban are now said to rely only on a network of retired Pakistani intelligence officers.

Although villagers warn that Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters are around and looking for targets, the insurgency seems to have little support. "They are in Pakistan, but they come into Nangarhar to attack," says a local journalist. "The people here do not want them."

On our second day of driving we leave Jalalabad and head northeast into the district of Kuna. This is poppy country, occasionally traversed by Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters but thoroughly controlled by two warlords: Hazrat Ali, the security chief, and Haji Din Mohammed, provincial governor.

In Khakhi village, we meet with a group of four *maliks*, or village leaders. All of them farm opium poppy and were mujahedeen during the anti-Soviet jihad, but now all speak openly of their hatred for the commanders.

"They have big houses and the best land. They will take a man's

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daughter if they want. And what do we have? Nothing," says Askar Khan, who sits hunched over on a wood and rope cot beneath a grape arbor. "All of us were wounded fighting the Russians. We fought for America, and now we are jobless. That is not good."

Another man shows me some gruesome scars and says he was taken to Indiana for treatment back when he was fighting the Red Army. Once these mujahedeen liked the United States, but now they are growing resentful. "Why does America give these commanders positions in government?" asks Askar Khan, the chief *malik*, who is slumped on the cot.

The poppy crop has already been harvested, but some of the local farmers show me big brown blocks of opium and offer me hash. They say that drought and hunger forced them to grow poppy. "Hazrat Ali controls the smuggling," says one of them. The *malik* Askar Khan explains, "There are no schools and no clinics in our district. The NGOs just spend money on themselves. When people are hungry they commit sins. If we only grow wheat, we will starve."

The men allege that Mirwais Yasini, head of Afghanistan's Counter Narcotics Directorate, has a deal with Hazrat Ali. When the harvest is done, Hazrat Ali tells the farmers to burn their fields, then Mirwais Yasini can tell the British (who are officially charged with running a war on poppy) that progress is being made. Counternarcotics officials in Kabul vigorously deny these charges.

The trip back to Kabul is as slow and dusty as the trip out. After a few hours of driving we see an overloaded passenger bus with luggage stacked on the roof. The vehicle sways and bounces toward us. Then it sways just a bit too far and topples over the edge of the road into a gully below. A cloud of dust rises and momentarily obscures the wreck.

The bus sits on its roof. Three men are trapped beneath it. About a dozen other people lie around in various states of injury: a young man limps by, his crushed foot wrapped in a bloody scarf. An old man lies by the road moaning. The men underneath the bus are dying; the crowd is growing frantic.

"Help! Push the bus! My brother is trapped," begs a desperate man from down in the gully. The trapped men are migrant laborers, Afghan refugees whose families live in Pakistan. The crowd of men starts pushing the bus back and forth, hoping to tip it one more rotation. But chaos and panic reign, there is no coordination to the effort and the bus weighs too much. A flatbed truck tries to back into an edge of the bus to flip it over but it is no use. The trapped men are being crushed. Someone says one has just died.

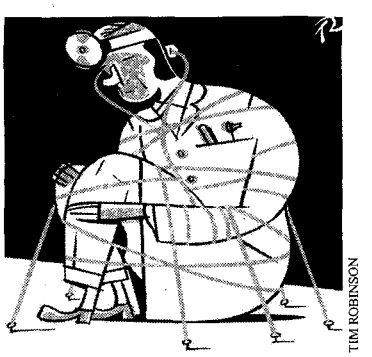
The whole debacle is a pathetically fitting, if clichéd, microcosm of Afghanistan's current state: The bus and these people mean little to the great powers that have appointed themselves masters of this place. Out here in the desert and mountains there is no democracy, no nation building, no NGOs, no American patrols—only an appallingly bad road that once, long ago, was a paved link to the world and one of Afghanistan's few symbols of modernity and national progress. Now the only sign of something like state power is a local commander's young gunman with a bayonet on his AK-47. He commandeers a car and orders it to take one of the wounded back to Jalalabad. ■

EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT COUNTRIES WITH NATIONAL HEALTHCARE ARE MORE COMPETITIVE.

Single-Payer: Good for Business

MORTON MINTZ

Business leaders complain endlessly that the current system of private healthcare insurance based on employment provides fewer and fewer people with less and less quality care at higher and higher cost. Yet Corporate America turns its back on a publicly financed system, which, by all indicators, the taxpayers would willingly support.


TIM ROBINSON

Publicly financed but privately run healthcare for all—including free choice of physicians—would cost employers far less in taxes than their costs for insurance. Universal coverage could also work magic in less obvious ways. For example, employers would no longer have to pay for medical care under workers' compensation, which in 2002 cost them more than $38 billion. Auto-insurance rates would fall for them—and everyone—if the carriers were no longer liable for medical and hospital bills. You'd think that in its own selfish interest, Corporate America would be fighting to replace the existing system with universal health coverage. Yet it doesn't lift a finger.

Meanwhile, under the Bush Administration healthcare coverage steadily shrinks. In 2000, according to the Census Bureau, 14 percent of Americans didn't have it; in 2003, 15.6 percent—45 million—did not. Actually, 85 million Americans under age 65 were uninsured over varying periods during 2003–04, up from 81.8 million in 2002–03, according to Families USA, the consumer health organization. As more and more Americans become uninsured, spending on healthcare soars. By 2001 it accounted for 13.9 percent of US gross domestic product. (It constituted a much smaller share of GDP in countries with universal healthcare, such as Sweden, 8.7 percent; France, 9.5 percent; and Canada, 9.7 percent.) Average family premiums in 2005 are projected to be $12,485, up $1,768 from 2004. The federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services expects healthcare outlays to rise from $1.8 trillion in 2004 to $2.7 trillion in 2010, nearly a trillion-dollar increase in six years. The forecast reflects annual increases of 14 percent to

Morton Mintz is a former Washington Post *reporter and a former chair of the Fund for Investigative Journalism.*

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18 percent. David Walker, head of the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the auditing arm of Congress, calls them "unsustainable."

A simple fact largely explains why spending bloats while the ranks of the insured thin: Health insurance is increasingly unaffordable. After rising 38 percent between 2000 and the last quarter of 2003, the costs of providing healthcare to employees rose 11.2 percent between January and May of 2004, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation's annual survey of 3,000 companies. "Close to 75 percent of 205 senior-level executives surveyed [in May] by the Detroit Regional Chamber rank employee health insurance as 'unaffordable' and 25 percent consider it 'very unaffordable,'" the *Detroit News* reported. The Kaiser Family Foundation says that from 2001 to 2004 the proportion of workers receiving health coverage on the job dropped from 65 percent to 61 percent, a loss of 5 million jobs with health benefits.

"Double-digit increases in healthcare costs are a drag on economic growth," says Henry Simmons, president of the National Coalition on Health Care, an alliance of groups working for healthcare reform. They "slow the rate of job growth," "suppress wage increases for current workers," "undercut the viability of pension funds," "put American firms at a steep disadvantage in world markets" and produce "severe long-term budgetary problems" for the federal and state governments.

Two unrelated but mutually reinforcing reports coming out on a single day, August 19, validate the economic-drag theory. First was a study that found a "relationship between job growth and health-care costs" in eighteen industries between 2000 and 2003. It was done for the Kerry campaign by Sarah Reber, assistant professor of policy studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, and Laura Tyson, dean of the London Business School and former head of President Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers and National Economic Council. The evidence, the authors write, "suggests that employers have reduced hiring in response to rising health insurance premiums," and that rising premiums have led to a deterioration in the quality of jobs. In industries where health-insurance benefits accounted for a comparatively large share of total employee compensation, job growth was slower than in industries where they accounted for a smaller one. Thus, in the accommodation and food services industry, "benefits constituted about 12 percent of total compensation for workers...and jobs grew...by about 2.5 percent. In manufacturing...the benefits share was 18.5 percent and job *losses* topped 18 percent." [Emphasis in original.]

This picture was reinforced by a *New York Times* article based on "government data, industry surveys and interviews with employers big and small." It said:

> A relentless rise in the cost of employee health insurance has become a significant factor in the employment slump, as the labor market adds only a trickle of new jobs each month despite nearly three years of uninterrupted economic growth.... employers big and small...remain reluctant to hire full-time employees because health insurance, which now costs the nation's employers an aver-

The View From Vermont

Dr. Deborah Richter has advocated state-sponsored health insurance for every Vermonter, at nearly fifty Rotary Clubs plus chambers of commerce and boardrooms. The reservations she heard from the business community are (1) they don't trust the government with healthcare, and (2) they fear that initially acceptable tax rates would soar as people came to view universal health coverage as a "blank check." "I agree with the business community to some extent," Richter told me. Under universal healthcare, decisions would have to be made about "egalitarian rationing," so as to meet everyone's basic needs while denying some things to anyone.

To pay the bills, public funds now financing Medicare, Medicaid and other government programs would, with a federal waiver, be funneled into a unified system. Payroll taxes—5.8 percent on employers, 2.9 percent on employees—would replace premiums and deductibles. There would be a $10 copayment for most services. The annual cost to employers would be about $1,450 per worker, far less than the cost of insurance premiums. "Savings could go to prevention and public-health improvement, further reducing long-term costs," Richter said. "Losing or changing jobs would not mean losing or changing health insurance. Most families and employers now paying for insurance would have decreased costs. Family impoverishment and bankruptcy due to illness would be eliminated. The cost-shifting that plagues our hospitals would be eliminated."

Richter senses "an increasingly positive response" to this plan because business people, especially manufacturers, are "getting killed" by the rising costs of healthcare. And they are disturbed—"feel like they're reneging"—when they must cut back benefits, she said. One employer of 100 Vermonters, hit by a 58 percent rise in a single year and expecting a 15 percent increase on top of that the next, told Richter he was thinking of moving his operation to Canada.

Richter believes the current system focuses excessively on payment for care of the sick—"pay as you go," she calls it. The "nutshell problem" with this is that it demands "a massive bureaucracy to limit individual utilization and to administer payments," she says. "The number of healthcare administrators needed to limit individual utilization" increased 2,500 percent between 1970 and 2000, while the number of doctors increased by only 150 percent, she pointed out.

"Yet pay-as-you-go does not guarantee healthcare to each of us should we get sick or be injured," Richter continued. "People who need disease management to avert, delay or moderate serious medical disorders don't get it. Diabetics are an example. How can they get disease-management without health insurance? And how can they get that insurance when for insurers—businesses whose first obligation is to the shareholders—the game is to insure healthy people? "We're headed for a train wreck," Richter warned. "We must replace pay-as-you-go, with its emphasis on individuals, with the 'investment model,' in which the whole society invests in a public good that we all may need but cannot provide for." —M.M.

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> age of about $3,000 a year for each worker, has become one of the fastest-growing costs.... Health premiums are sapping corporate balance sheets even more than the rising cost of energy.

Reacting to rising expenditures on insurance, corporate managements cut back on employee health benefits, triggering worker unrest. Consider the five-month strike against supermarket chains in Southern California—the longest in the industry's history. It left about 60,000 union workers jobless, and it seriously hurt the owners as well. The central issue—in a state where half of all personal bankruptcies are related to medical bills—was the demand by Safeway, Kroger and Albertsons that members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union pay much more for health benefits. The settlement, reached last February, sent a grim message to grocery workers everywhere.

The strike "would not have occurred if we had a system of universal healthcare coverage," Greg Denier, assistant to the international president of the UFCW, told me. "All of our strikes in the past decade have occurred because of the absence of universal healthcare." Moreover, universal health coverage would have narrowed the wide gap in operating costs between the unionized chains and nonunion competitors, particularly 800-pound gorilla Wal-Mart. Unlike the chains, the world's biggest retailer charges so much for miserly health insurance that more than 60 percent of its poorly paid employees (averaging $8 an hour) don't buy it. Denier saw the strike as a symptom of "the slow-motion collapse of the employment-based healthcare system."

Lawyer Harry Burton represented Safeway and Giant Food in subsequent negotiations with the UFCW in the Washington, DC, region. Speaking "as an individual," he essentially agreed with Denier. Universal health insurance would have "a profound effect" not just on the supermarket industry but "on nearly all collective bargaining," he told me. Nonunion companies "virtually never" provide healthcare of the same quality as that provided by unionized competitors, thus creating "a vast disparity in costs." That's why a tax-supported national system would result in "a leveling of the playing field." I asked Burton what explains the resistance or indifference of employers to universal health insurance. "Very frequently it's ideology," he replied.

Business leaders worship marketplace ideology "almost like religion," says Raymond Werntz, who for nearly thirty years ran healthcare programs for Whitman Corporation, a Chicago-based multinational holding company. "It's emotional." In 1999 Werntz became the first president of the Consumer Health Education Council in Washington, a program of the Employee Benefit Research Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan group. He saw it as his mission to try to persuade employers to face the "huge, huge" issue of the uninsured because, he told me, "business has to be involved with the solution." The problem that emerged was its "unwillingness to even think about a solution." Last year, after funding ran out, a disappointed Werntz became the council's last and only president.

Publicly financed universal health insurance comes in different forms. For Americans, however, none should hold more interest than single-payer. It's "one and the same thing" as Medicare for everybody, Werntz told me. Does the Corporate America that's happy with Medicare understand this? I asked. "It's a dialogue that hasn't happened yet," he replied. "My life for four years was

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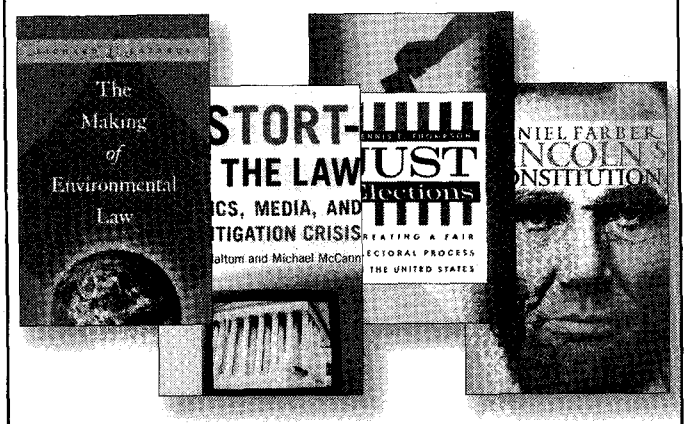

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trying to get business people in a room with single-payer people. I couldn't do it." CEOs of large corporations see it as something "that smacks of socialism," Werntz said, and therefore as "heresy."

Somehow, they don't see Medicare as heresy. Yet it's largely why the tax-financed share of US health spending is "the highest in the world," according to Drs. Steffie Woolhandler and David Himmelstein, associate professors at Harvard Medical School and founders of Physicians for a National Health Program. Writing in the July/August 2002 issue of *Health Affairs*, they put the share at 59.8 percent. No wonder: Federal tax revenues pay for Medicare, Medicaid and the medical-care systems for the military, the Veterans Administration, federal employees and Congress; income-, sales- and property-tax revenues buy coverage for state and local public employees. Taxation also hugely subsidizes health insurance while benefiting mostly "the affluent," the authors noted.

In 1991 the GAO made a stark finding regarding single-payer's benefits: "If the universal coverage and single-payer features of the Canadian system [had been] applied in the United States" in that year, "the savings in administrative costs"—$66.9 billion—"would have been more than enough to finance insurance coverage for the millions of Americans who are currently uninsured," the GAO said in a report. The $3 billion left over "would be enough...to permit a reduction, or possibly even the elimination, of copayments and deductibles."

'The rising cost of health benefits is the biggest issue on our plate.... it's a system that's broken.' —Ford CEO William Clay Ford

Early this year, a comprehensive study published in the *International Journal of Health Services* reached this stunning conclusion: "The United States wastes more on health-care bureaucracy than it would cost to provide health care to all its uninsured." The authors, Woolhandler, Himmelstein and Dr. Sidney Wolfe, director of Public Citizen's Health Research Group, went on to write: "Administrative expenses will consume at least $399.4 billion of a total health expenditure of $1,660.5 billion in 2003. Streamlining administrative overhead to Canadian levels would save approximately $286 billion in 2002, $6,940 for each of the 41.2 million Americans who were uninsured as of 2001. This is substantially more than would be needed to provide full insurance coverage."

Canada has had a single-payer system for more than thirty years. (Australia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Taiwan also have one.) American executives who have run Canadian subsidiaries see it as a business boon. Take General Motors. In 2003 its costs of building a midsize car in Canada were $1,400 less than building the identical car in the United States (the comparable figures for DaimlerChrysler and Ford were $1,300 and $1,200). Such savings are no mystery. Canadian companies pay far less in taxes for health coverage for everyone than the premiums they would pay under the US system to provide their employees with comparable benefits.

Highly placed Canadian business executives affirm that single-payer nurtures free enterprise. A. Charles Baillie, while chairman and CEO of Toronto Dominion Bank, one of Canada's six largest, hailed it in 1999 as "an economic asset, not a burden." He told the Vancouver Board of Trade, "In an era of globalization, we need every competitive and comparative advantage we have. And the fundamentals of our health care system are one of those advantages." He added: "The fact is, the free market...cannot work in the context of universal health care. While health care could be purchased like any other form of insurance...the risk and resource equation will always be such that, in some cases, demand will not be matched by supply. In other words, some people will always be left out." (A recent report by the World Bank ranked welfare states like Denmark, Finland and Sweden high in international competitiveness. An author of the study said, "Social protection is good for business, it takes the burden off of businesses for health care costs.")

In 2002, top executives of the Big Three automakers' Canadian units joined Basil (Buzz) Hargrove, president of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) union, in signing a "Joint Letter on Publicly Funded Health Care." At a press conference with Hargrove, Michael Grimaldi, president and general manager of GM Canada and a GM vice president, called single-payer "a strategic advantage for Canada." The joint letter, also signed by Ford's and DaimlerChrysler's presidents and CEOs, Alain Batty and Ed Brust, said that while providing "essential and affordable healthcare services for all," single-payer "significantly reduces total labour costs...compared to the cost of equivalent private insurance services purchased by US-based automakers" and "has been an important ingredient" in the success of Canada's "most important export industry." The *Toronto Star* explained how the CAW used "credible corporate data" to quantify "the competitive advantage that [single-payer] provides to the Canadian auto industry. The union compared the hourly labour costs of vehicle assembly in Canada and the United States. The Canadian rate, including wages, benefits and payroll taxes, was $29.90 per hour. The American rate was $45.60. (All figures are in US dollars.) Healthcare accounted for more than a quarter of the difference. It saved Canadian employers $4 per hour per worker." Monthly health-coverage costs for Canadian employers average about $50, mostly for items such as eyeglasses and orthopedic shoes; health-insurance costs for US employers average $552, the *Washington Post* has reported.

"The rising cost of health benefits is the biggest issue on our plate that we can't solve," Ford CEO William Clay Ford told a 2003 conference of Michigan business executives. "Healthcare is out of control—it's a system that's broken." Last year the company spent $3.2 billion on healthcare for 560,000 employees and their dependents and surviving spouses, or more than six times net profits of $495 million. William Ford urged a national solution and assigned vice chairman Allan Gilmour to craft a proposal. Early this year Gilmour told fellow industry executives that high healthcare costs have "created a competitive gap that's driving investment decisions away from the US." He told a subsequent investment conference, "We're going to have to have a national solution," only to add, "That national solution does not mean, necessarily, na-

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tional healthcare." Why not? He didn't say.

After Jack Smith, president and general manager of GM Canada, became president and CEO of the parent company, an ad in the *New York Times* placed by single-payer advocates in 1994 quoted him as saying, "I personally favor single-payer." Now, however, GM "does not support" it, spokesperson Doris Powers told me. Because? "Much has changed in health care since Smith...made statements about universal, single-payer healthcare." What's changed? She didn't say.

A General Motors that hugs single-payer in Canada would seem to have compelling reasons to hug it here. GM covers healthcare costs for 1.1 million Americans. Last year's bill was $4.8 billion—$1 billion more than earnings. In its third-quarter report the company reduced its 2004 earnings forecast because rising US healthcare costs were hurting profits. GM's projected costs for providing healthcare benefits to current and future retirees is $63 billion, a burden immensely heavier than is carried by competitors based in universal-coverage countries, the *New York Times* reported in September. Yet, as the *Detroit Free Press* has noted, GM "has set aside less than $10 billion for that obligation."

In 2001 GM was reeling from a prescription-drug bill up to 22 percent above 2000's $1.1 billion. "Prescription drugs are the fastest-growing part of GM's health-care costs, accounting for more than 25 percent of its total medical spending last year," *Newsweek* reported. GM was "seeing red" because in 2000 it had spent $52 million just for Prilosec, a brand-name ulcer medicine. "That is millions more than GM executives believe they should have spent," the magazine said. "They blame much of the extra cost on savvy marketing by Prilosec's maker AstraZeneca." GM is fighting back with an "aggressive plan to curb drug spending," *Newsweek* continued. "Point man" James Cubbin "has been taking his case to senior executives at some of the nation's largest drug makers, including AstraZeneca."

But *Newsweek*—and Powers—missed an embarrassing part of the story. AstraZeneca chairman Percy Barnevik joined GM's board in 1996, while Smith was GM's chairman. Pfizer executive vice president Karen Katen followed in 1997, and the noses of both of these price-gouging drug companies are still in GM's tent. Surprise: The pharmaceutical houses "aren't backing down," *Newsweek* said. Rather than going hat in hand to pharmaceutical executives, Canada uses single-payer's price controls to cap drug prices. In two other universal-coverage countries, Australia and New Zealand, pharmacies charge 20 percent to 30 percent less than in Canada, the *Wall Street Journal* reported in July.

Unlike GM and Ford, DaimlerChrysler supports single-payer. "A lot of people think a single-payer system is better," vice president Thomas Hadrych told the *Washington Post*. Since 1990 Chrysler—and DaimlerChrysler after the merger—has regularly endorsed it, in a letter appended to its contracts with the United Automobile Workers.

No matter how urgently needed, no matter how commonsensical, no matter how much bottom lines would be fattened, single-payer or other fundamental healthcare reforms stall unless backed by the business organizations that govern the government. The Clinton Administration learned this to its sorrow after proposing its complex, comprehensive plan.

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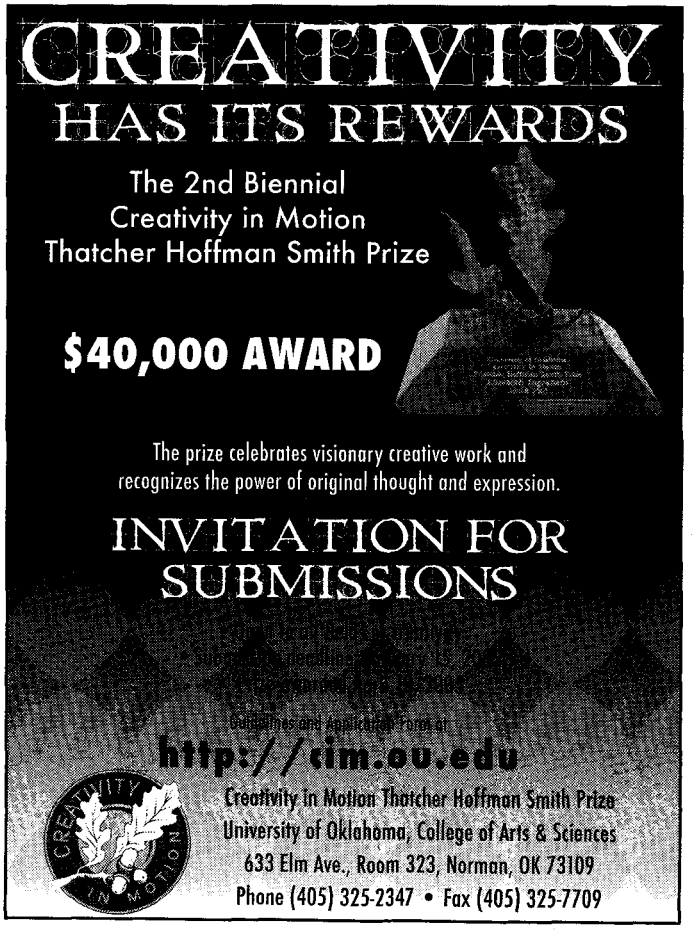
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Business organizations "effectively killed the bill," Walter Maher, former vice president for public policy of DaimlerChrysler, wrote last year in the *American Journal of Public Health*. The bill aroused formidable opposition from businesses such as fast-food chains like McDonald's. It mostly hired young people, worked them less than full time, paid them little and provided scant if any health coverage. Of the PepsiCo chains' hourly employees, a survey indicated, 71 percent were covered by someone else's health insurance. If that someone was a parent employed by, say, an automaker facing global competition, the manufacturer was effectively subsidizing chains that had no such competition. Free-riding defeated a primary goal of the bill, which was to spread healthcare costs throughout the economy by letting no employers escape paying their fair share.

The bill received a big boost when the US Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) let pragmatism trump ideology and endorsed it. And the mighty Business Roundtable (BRT), an association of 150 CEOs of the country's biggest corporations, with multitrillion-dollar revenues, was "at least prepared not to oppose" the mandate, Maher said in the article.

'The most important thing is the achievement of affordable, high-quality health coverage for everybody.' —Ron Pollack, Families USA

But insurers and other businesses that profited from preserving the healthcare status quo exerted fierce counterpressures. The Chamber "suddenly reversed course and totally rejected the Clinton Plan," Maher wrote. The NAM abruptly withdrew its endorsement six weeks after granting it. At the BRT several politically powerful members, including the CEOs of eight major and a few lesser pharmaceutical manufacturers, and of a dozen insurers and healthcare providers, opposed the bill. It got only a single vote—Chrysler's, Maher told me. "It's definitely fair to say that CEOs are very reluctant to take unpopular positions against their colleagues in the BRT," he added. "If a huge majority of them are staunch conservatives who have no interest in health reform, or in using the government to control costs, or to expand coverage, or even to moderate health costs using regulatory tools, it'll be a rare CEO who will want to take on his CEO buddies. That's absolutely true."

Today, BRT executive director Patricia Hanahan Engman contends that "public financing cannot provide the same level of quality doctors, hospitals and prescription drugs generated by the competition inherent in the private market." She should tell that to GM president and CEO G. Richard Wagoner Jr. Judged by sixteen top health indicators, he said in June, the United States ranks twelfth among thirteen industrialized countries. "It will be a cold day in hell when the BRT leads the charge for universal health coverage in the United States," Maher told me.

If the Democrats win the White House and take control of Congress, John Kerry could pass his employer-based healthcare plan, which calls for expanding coverage to nearly 95 percent of Americans, including all children, and for a federal insurance pool that would pay 75 percent of "catastrophic" illness bills. Crucial elements might survive even if the GOP continues to control the House—mainly because of forceful backing from pragmatic business leaders. For example, the Chamber of Commerce signed on early to Kerry's pool idea, calling it "a seed for bipartisan reform." In late October the *New York Times* reported that the Chamber was acclaiming the idea as "a worthy concept, an excellent use of federal tax dollars," while some Senate Republicans are pushing it, and "lawmakers and lobbyists say that regardless of who wins the presidential election, Congress will soon take up the idea." To be sure, Kerry's scheme may face attacks by the usual suspects and the lawmakers they buy. One influential critic, the National Business Group on Health, has more than 200 members, including at least a dozen drug and medical-device manufacturers plus three dozen healthcare providers and insurers. A Wal-Mart vice president sits on its board.

Advocating universal health coverage while the GOP controls the White House and Congress would be "tilting at windmills," DaimlerChrysler's Dennis Fitzgibbons told me. Maher said any industry subject to government regulation "has got to be concerned about irritating the regulator," meaning the Bush Administration. A single-payer reform proposal, by seeking to eliminate the insurance industry, he warned in his article, would make it and many other businesses "instant and unnecessary opponents." He recommends other forms of tax-financed universal health coverage that would use the industry. An example would be a system in which employer/employee payroll taxes would finance coverage for the working population, with employees offered several choices of health plans, as the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan does. A Medicare equivalent would provide for the elderly and nonworking population.

"I don't believe [single-payer] will be achievable in my lifetime," says Ron Pollack, executive director of Families USA. Ideologues "will never support it." Industries heavily invested in the present system "will spend every last dollar to stop it." He recognizes that on "a blank slate," employer-based coverage "absolutely" makes no sense. But "in terms of political feasibility," trying to dismantle the present system would make matters "much worse," he told me. "The most important thing is the achievement of affordable, high-quality health coverage for everybody." To him, the crucial question is: "At what point are we willing to say that there's a higher principle in truly moving toward universal coverage than in knocking our heads against a stone wall, in absolute frustration about a methodology [single-payer] that is not going to be achievable in our lifetime?"

Surely in a Republican Washington the prospects for publicly financed universal health insurance are remote. But Washington isn't everywhere. Deborah Richter, a Vermont physician, believes it could still be enacted in every state. As president of Vermont Health Care for All, she's been campaigning to that end in her own state for five years, with impressive results [see sidebar, page 20]. Universal access to affordable, high-quality healthcare should be conceived "as a public good, as are roads, education, and police and fire protection," she says. Making it "a practical issue works. Trying to win support for it by making it a moral issue never works." By resisting the merger of practicality with morality that universal health care embodies, Corporate America is blowing a supreme opportunity to do well by doing good. Enlightened self-interest this is not. ■

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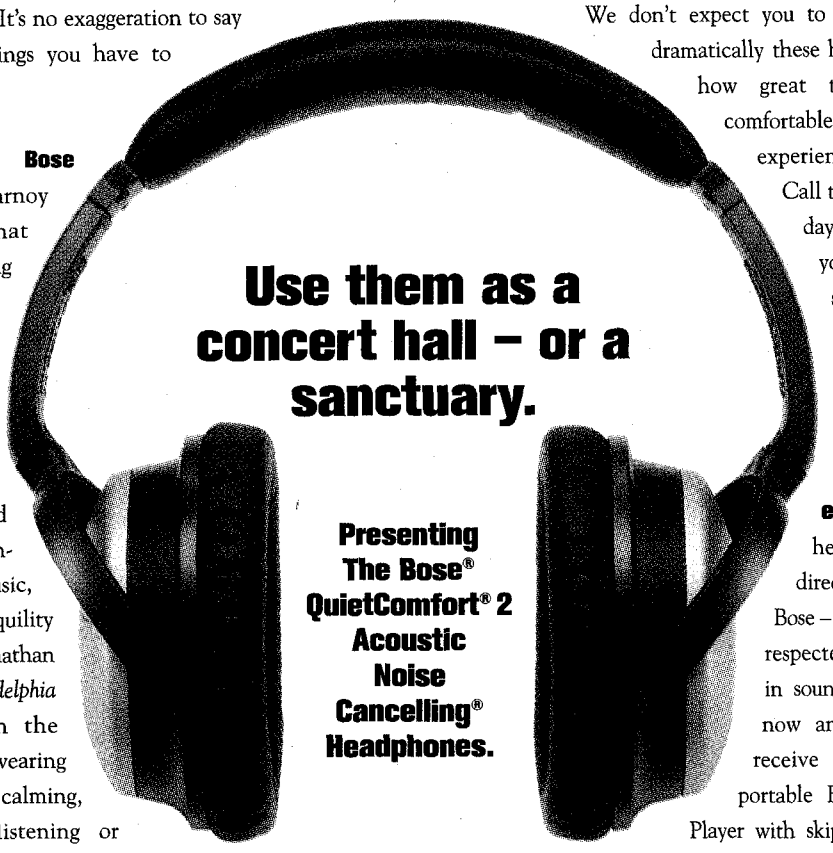

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LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

San Mateo, Calif.

■ Some American Jews are choosing to bridge the divides with listening and dialogue. In an unprecedented breakthrough in Detroit, Jews and Muslims brought together their young people, who wrote, and performed on stage, The Children of Abraham Project to communicate their different stories and hopes for a better, shared future. It was endorsed by the ADL, AJC and Hadassah, along with the Arab-American Center for Economic and Social Services and Council of Islamic Organizations of Michigan.

In September, California's Jewish Camp Tawonga hosted the second annual Palestinian-Jewish Family Peacemakers Camp—Oseh Shalom/Sanea al-Salam, the first in North America, maybe anywhere. Whole families, including Israeli staff, lived together for two days and three nights, continuing to transform their relationships. Our local Jewish community has invited panels from the twelve-year-old Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group into the local university's Jewish student Shabbatons and Israel awareness events, so we can better remember who we are—neighbors forever.

LIBBY TRAUBMAN, LEN TRAUBMAN
Founders, Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue in California

UP AGAINST THE WAL-MART

Amherst, Mass.

■ Kudos to Liza Featherstone for writing about the importance of unionizing Wal-Mart. However, she seems to suggest a single organizing strategy, "open source unionism," whereby individuals can join the union without having to organize their entire workplace. If we have learned anything in the labor movement over the past decade, it is that any serious effort to topple this behemoth will require multiple strategies. A serious campaign against Wal-Mart will have to bring real economic pressure against it, using the most aggressive, multifaceted and creative coordinated strategic campaign we can muster. We will have to undertake a massive research effort to understand Wal-Mart and its operations and begin to exploit its vulnerabilities in a number of areas simultaneously. For example, given the exposés of Wal-Mart workers being locked in after stores close and its discrimination against women, we should explore action in regulatory areas. Board members and lenders should be examined and, taking a page from HERE's hotel-organizing playbook, we may want to find ways to interfere with Wal-Mart construction until it agrees to union neutrality once a store is built. We also must not forget that Wal-Mart is a global company, so our campaign must be global as well. Let's not close down our thinking in search of the one true way, but instead bring together as many ideas and strategies as we can. We're going to need them all. TOM JURAVICH
Labor Center, UMass

Seattle

■ Liza Featherstone's emphasis on bringing Wal-Mart workers into the union camp is right on. Wal-Mart is the game if you're talking about rebuilding the unions: 1.2 million workers, biggest private US employer, the very heart of darkness when it comes to antiunionism, etc., etc. Featherstone mentions all the creative union organizing, but one idea is missing: mobilizing union members to help organize. In summer 2001 the UFCW published the results of a poll showing that more than 10 percent (!) of the UFCW's 1.2 million members were willing to donate five hours a month to "organize the unorganized." Imagine 150,000 UFCW-ers turned loose on Wal-Mart! UFCW could never hire even a hundredth of that group, and these folks are willing to do it for free.

Besides numbers, a big advantage to having amateurs help with new-member organizing is the increased credibility you get with the people you're trying to bring into the union. In the workplace, shop stewards are often told they are more believable than professional union reps. Co-workers say, "You're not getting paid to tell me this stuff, so what's really going on?" C'mon, big union leaders, let's mobilize the rank and file and bring Wal-Mart into the fold!

BRIAN KING

San Francisco

■ Liza Featherstone revealed, perhaps inadvertently, one of the major problems of today's labor movement: lack of intra-union solidarity. That labor leaders admit the impossibility of getting their members to boycott Wal-Mart is disgraceful. Have they tried? Why isn't union leadership hyperactive in casting the struggle against low wages and discrimination against women and organizers at Wal-Mart into the broader picture, i.e., an injury to one is an injury to all? Unfortunately, with some notable exceptions, the US labor movement appeals solely to worker self-interest, and union strength is an issue only when one's contract negotiations are on the table. We'll have ourselves to blame when our union jobs, too, are swept away by the creeping Wal-Martization of America. HELEN VOZENILEK
International "Brotherhood" of Electrical Workers, LU 6

Lindenhurst, NY

■ As a Teamster for twenty-two years, fourteen spent as a shop steward, it was with sad resignation that I read your article about labor taking on Wal-Mart. While I am encouraged that people are working the issue, it's too early to abandon the boycott concept. It would be a rare circumstance where labor could make real inroads with any company unless its profits are endangered. And resources should be spent on educating the membership as well as the public to this wolf in sheep's clothing. Watching Wal-Mart's ad campaign here in New York would have you believing that they're the best thing to come along since the New Deal, making selfless contributions to communities, dragging slum neighborhoods back into respectability and providing career opportunities to the underprivileged. How, though, do we encourage union members, who make at least 30 percent of their union credit-card purchases at Wal-Mart, not to shop there, when so-called labor leaders like Wade Rathke casually remark that they can't keep themselves from feeding money to the beast in order to get a good deal on a tire?

MICHAEL ANDERSON

Willmar, Minn.

■ The key to organizing Wal-Mart workers lies in the NLRB's power to seek NLRA Section 10(j) injunctive relief on behalf of employees harmed by Wal-Mart's unfair labor practices during a union representation election. Because Wal-Mart's antiunion animus is easy to establish by citing the language in its own handbooks, manuals and videotapes, any NLRA Section 7 complaint from Wal-Mart employees should prompt the NLRB to seek a temporary bargaining order while the unfair labor practice complaint is resolved. Since the early days at Wal-Mart, blatant (and illegal) antiunion animus has been the foundation of its expansion and domination. The "We Care" open-door policy, which was established when Wal-Mart had only 2,300 employees, was specifically created to avoid unionization. Thirty-five years of overworking and underpaying "associates," hundreds of discrimination charges and Fair Labor Standards Act violations, blatant disregard for the NLRA and other efforts to remain union-free clearly illustrate Wal-Mart's antiunion animus.

Furthermore, every time the NLRB issues an unfair labor practice complaint against Wal-Mart, the regional director should seek an interim 10(j) bargaining order to neutralize Wal-Mart's historic pattern of irreparably contaminating the "laboratory conditions" that should exist prior to a representation election—even in cases where there has been no conclusive show of majority support for a union. The first step to gaining 10(j) injunctive relief requires the UFCW (or another union) to thoroughly document the Section 7 violations that occur at a given Wal-Mart store during an election campaign. Next, the union must quickly file a thorough and accurate complaint with the local NLRB office, explicitly asking for injunctive relief—temporary recognition of the union and an order to bargain with the union until the initial complaint is adjudicated. It will only take one brave regional director to seek 10(j) injunctive relief and an interim bargaining order in a complaint against Wal-Mart, along with one fair-minded federal district court judge to issue the interim relief, to make a profound change in the entire retail industry. If one Wal-Mart store is forced to recognize and bargain with a union, surely a movement toward union representation would spread to other Wal-Marts, and other retail stores nationwide.

JOHN LINDEMANN

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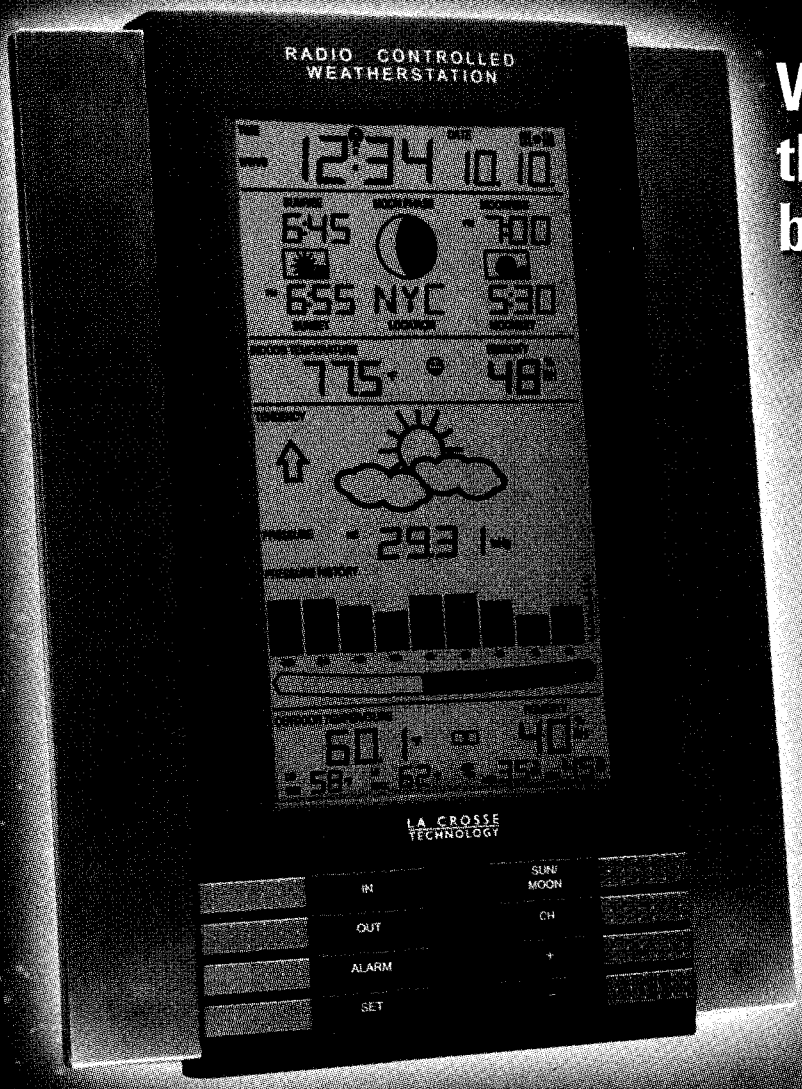

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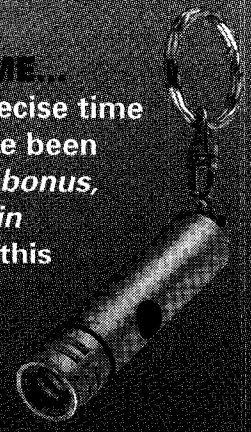

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(Continued From Page 6)
initiatives are likely to proliferate under either administration—as part of a renewed 9/11 Commission bill or otherwise—and the silence about civil liberties that has characterized the presidential campaign is a troubling sign of the challenges to come.

The House version of the 9/11 bill contained a wide variety of anti-immigrant provisions, and some of these did generate public opposition. Civil liberties and human rights groups were joined by both the 9/11 Commission and the White House in objecting to provisions that would have made political asylum more difficult to obtain, denied due process to foreign nationals here less than five years by expanding "expedited removal," limited judicial review and allowed deportation of foreign nationals to countries with records of torture if that country promised not to torture the particular foreign national being expelled. But almost nothing was heard about other parts of the law, which would have redefined the "terrorist" grounds for removal, even though those amendments would have resurrected wholesale the tactics of the McCarthy era: penalizing speech; imposing guilt by association; retroactively holding people responsible for conduct legal at the time they engaged in it; and even punishing innocent children for acts of their parents, over which they have no control.

The House bill would have made pure speech a deportable offense, for example. Any immigrant who "endorsed terrorist activity," broadly defined as virtually any use or threat to use a weapon against person or property, could be expelled. So, too, could any foreign national who advocated support for a "terrorist organization," even more broadly defined as any two or more people who have ever engaged in such activity. The bill also would have made mere membership in or support of any such "terrorist organization" a deportable offense, even when the government had not identified the group as off-limits, and even if the person could prove his activities didn't further any terrorist activity whatsoever.

Under this law, a South African immigrant who supported the African National Congress's lawful, nonviolent antiapartheid work during the 1980s would be deportable today, and it would be no defense to show that the support was legal at the time. (The ANC also used violence, and the State Department regularly labeled it a "terrorist organization" until it came to power in South Africa.) Indeed, Nobel Peace Prize–winner Nelson Mandela himself would be barred entry. Also deportable under the House bill would be anyone who ever wrote in defense of the right to use force for national liberation, as did the Founders of our own country. It would have even rendered deportable immigrants who urged support of the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, or who supported the *contras* in Nicaragua, regardless of whether their targets were lawful military targets, and regardless of the fact that the United States supported both military struggles. Perhaps cruelest of all, the law called for deporting spouses and children of anyone found inadmissible for having ties to a "terrorist organization," visiting the sins of the father on the child regardless of the child's involvement in or even knowledge of the father's wrongdoing.

These measures are unnecessary and unconstitutional. It is already a deportable offense under the Patriot Act to support a designated terrorist group, and to engage in or support any terrorist activity. And the new provisions violate guarantees of free speech, free association and due process—rights the Supreme Court has said don't distinguish between citizens and foreign nationals.

Yet these measures inspired little comment, much less opposition. So close to the election, neither party wanted to be portrayed as "soft on terrorism." In this campaign, it was considered political suicide to express concern for civil liberties—Dick Cheney would immediately portray you as inviting a nuclear attack. In December 2001 Attorney General Ashcroft was roundly criticized for testifying in Congress that those who raised civil liberties concerns "only aid terrorists." But this fall most politicians acted as if they were under Ashcroft's orders. If this is what the pressure of a presidential campaign does to civil liberties, just imagine what the next terrorist attack will do. DAVID COLE

David Cole (cole@law.georgetown.edu), Nation *legal affairs correspondent, is the author of* Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism.

Nader's Flawed Calculus

From the start of his independent campaign for the presidency early this year, Ralph Nader constantly argued that he would draw as many or more votes from Republican George W. Bush as from John Kerry, the President's Democratic challenger. Yet Nader's calculus looks to be off. If Nader were not on the ballot in key battleground states, according to a poll conducted for The Nation Institute, nearly three times as many of his backers in those states would vote for Kerry as for Bush: some 49 percent of those surveyed said they would switch to Kerry, compared with 17 percent for Bush. According to the poll, conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates, 24 percent said they were unsure what they would do, while 10 percent indicated that they would not vote.

In response to the poll findings, Nader continued to insist a few days before the election that he would draw more votes from Republicans than Democrats. But Democrats and progressive activists expressed concern that a small number of votes for Nader could tip important battleground states to Bush. They fear a repeat of 2000, when a number of states were decided for Bush by margins of less than 1 percent. Nader drew more votes than Bush's margin of victory in New Hampshire and Florida. Had either of those states gone for Al Gore, Nader's Democratic critics argue, Gore would have become President.

In the survey of 500 registered voters who said they backed Nader or might consider voting for him in Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, West Virginia and Wisconsin, the pollsters found that Nader backers tended to have high regard for the consumer advocate; they gave him an average rating of 77.4 on a scale of 0 to 100. At the same time, by a 77-to-21 margin, those who said they were voting for Nader rated Bush poorly (full story and poll data available at www.thenation.com). Those numbers led activists who have long sought to get Nader out of the race to argue one last time that the independent's exit from the competition, even at the last minute, could elect Kerry.

Neither Nader nor his aides offered any indication that they would consider such a strategy, however. JOHN NICHOLS

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Gods Must Be Crazy

DANIEL LAZARE

"Our government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith—and I don't care what it is." Thus spoke the noted theologian Dwight Eisenhower on Flag Day in 1954. And though Ike's words may seem fatuous, they are in fact so pregnant with meaning that they deserve to be carefully parsed.

§ "Our government makes no sense...": Quite right. A system based on gridlock, a complicated array of checks and balances prone to breakdown and an unchangeable eighteenth-century Constitution to hold it all in place is indeed an affront to good sense, as even our Golfer in Chief was beginning to realize.

§ "...unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith...": Right again. The fact that America would not only make do but prosper with such a ramshackle form of government is a puzzle, one that Eisenhower could solve only by positing the existence of some sort of higher authority. To believe in America, in his view, it was necessary to believe in a divine power able to see the United States through all difficulties, to save it from itself, in a sense.

§ "...and I don't care what it is": As a good pluralist, Eisenhower was unconcerned with the exact nature of the guiding force in question. His only concern was that Americans continue to believe in something so as to make sense of a senseless system. Just as ancient Rome tolerated all cults as long as they sacrificed to the emperor, the postwar United States, he believed, should welcome all forms of religious expression as long as they bolstered the national cause. Faith in God and faith in America were mutually reinforcing.

Until recently, that pretty much summed up the US attitude toward religion, an attitude that was flexible, ecumenical and utterly self-confident in its conviction that there was no faith that America could not successfully absorb and put to its own use. Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Tibetan Buddhism—it didn't matter. As long as they believed in some—any—form of higher authority, there was no reason that they could not be mobilized in behalf of anti-Communism and the Free World. But now, more than a dozen years into the post-Soviet era, the United States finds itself confronting a major branch of monotheism that not only refuses to believe that God is on America's side but, according to some of its leading spokespeople, sees Him as positively hostile.

The result is not only a crisis in US political theology but of liberal ideology generally. Formerly, it was an article of faith among liberal ecumenicists that all religions were equal and that all were essentially benign. Whether or not certain holy texts called for the wholesale massacre of nonbelievers was irrelevant. They were all written a long, long time ago and, anyway, such texts had to be understood metaphorically rather than literally. But given all that has happened since 9/11, the old faith has been shaken. How can we be sure that Islam is an ideology of peace—because George W. Bush tells us so? Are Muslim liberals correct in arguing that the Koran can be interpreted so that it accords with the needs of modern society? Or is the rise of militant Islam a sign that there are limits to interpretation and that the text is now reasserting itself in increasingly dangerous ways?

More to the point, how can we even begin to evaluate a religion stretching across some fourteen centuries that, starting just twenty-five years after Mohammed's death, has suffered violent split after split between Kharijites and Umayyads, Sunnis and Shiites, and so on? Rather than an abstraction known as "Islam," Edward Said argued, we should only talk about the many local "Islams" that

Daniel Lazare, a regular contributor to Books & the Arts, is writing a book on Islam, Christianity and Judaism for Pantheon.

IN THIS ESSAY:

WHAT'S RIGHT WITH ISLAM: A New Vision for Muslims and the West.
By Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf.
HarperSanFrancisco.
314 pp. $23.95.

THE CASE FOR ISLAMO-CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION.
By Richard Bulliet.
Columbia.
187 pp. $24.50.

GLOBALIZED ISLAM: The Search for a New Ummah.
By Olivier Roy.
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THE WAR FOR MUSLIM MINDS: Islam and the West.
By Gilles Kepel.
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327 pp. $23.95.

TERROR AND CIVILIZATION: Christianity, Politics, and the Western Psyche.
By Shadia Drury.
Palgrave Macmillan.
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THE END OF FAITH: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason.
By Sam Harris.
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have taken shape from Morocco to Indonesia and the Philippines. If so, what are we to make of such variants as Saudi Wahhabism, which, even though rooted in a specific time and place, reject particularism and insist on Islam as a single, undifferentiated whole? Are they right or wrong—and if we are forbidden to talk about Islam as a whole, how are we to know?

Although Islam's origins are unclear—scholars increasingly reject the tale of a desert prophet propounding the Koran to a small circle of followers—one thing stands out: Islamic history *is* different. Unlike the Jews, whose efforts at establishing a theocracy in the tiny province of Judea met with repeated disaster, or the Christians, who spent nearly three centuries as a despised and persecuted sect, Islam is a product of almost dizzying political success. Within a century of Mohammed's reputed death in AD 632, Muslims had not only unified the Arabian Peninsula but had conquered the Persian Empire, humbled the Byzantines, made short work of the Visigothic kingdom in Spain and were directly threatening the Franks in the heart of the Christian West. Whereas today it is Islam that feels besieged, 1,200 years ago it was the Latin Church.

Thus, where Christianity went from defeat to victory, Islam went from victory to defeat, which multiple schisms have only compounded. The question now is whether this distinctive evolution has left Islam with an irrepressible longing to return to the battles of yesteryear, to right the old wrongs and to resume its march of conquest. As one expert noted, "In the Muslim community, the holy war is a religious duty, because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and (the obligation to) convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force"—which, if true, would make peaceful coexistence an impossibility from the start. As much as one would like to dismiss such sentiments as typical of the bigoted Orientalism that Said denounced so vigorously, the expert in question happens to be the fourteenth-century Arab thinker Ibn Khaldun, whose opinions on this topic, needless to say, are not so easily dismissed. Yet in the years since, Islam has passed through periods of dormancy in which jihad seemed to be the farthest thing from anyone's mind, which suggests that Ibn Khaldun is as irrelevant to contemporary events as the Book of Joshua is to Israeli policy in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The questions go on and on, as they invariably do when faith, ecumenical or otherwise, is shaken. But now comes Feisal Abdul Rauf, the imam of the Masjid al-Farah mosque in New York and a leading Muslim liberal, to assure us that fears of Islamic expansionism are exaggerated and that Islam's attitude to political power is more ambiguous than most people realize. One problem, he writes in his new book *What's Right With Islam*, is that few Jews and Christians understand how much all three religions have in common. Although non-Muslims see Islam as a comparatively new religion, Muslims see it as an old one, a return to the plain desert faith of the patriarch Abraham and his followers. Where Christianity created a new and complicated theological edifice, Islam's aim has been to strip away such accretions and "reestablish the Abrahamic ethic" that is, according to Abdul Rauf, at the core of Western monotheism.

While the hijab can serve as a symbol of resistance to colonialism, it is simultaneously a sign of submission to religion and patriarchy.

Hence Islam is, at bottom, a restorationist ideology, a back-to-basics movement whose attitude to Judaism and Christianity is fundamentally benign. Although Osama bin Laden uses the term "jihad" in the most literal sense, Abdul Rauf writes that the word does not refer to literal warfare so much as "the psychological war we wage within ourselves to establish the kingdom of God...both in our individual life and in our collective communal lives"—a concept of inward, moral struggle with which Jews and Christians are not unfamiliar. Despite fundamentalist calls for an explicitly Muslim society governed by Muslim law, Abdul Rauf argues that Islam is only theocratic to the degree that it urges the state to acknowledge God as "the ultimate ruler," a notion of divine power as a guiding force that, as we have seen, would not have troubled Eisenhower one bit. As for Shariah, the notorious legal code that Americans associate with forced amputations and the stoning of adulterers, *What's Right With Islam* maintains that Shariah should be understood first and foremost as a moral framework for the promotion of five all-important facets of human existence: life, mind (i.e., psychological well-being), religion, property and family. Since many or even most Americans also embrace such goals, Abdul Rauf contends, the United States is a better Muslim society, more "Shariah-compliant" even, than any number of regimes in the Middle East.

Clearly, Abdul Rauf is using the term "Muslim" the same way that Victorians used "Christian," i.e., not so much to connote a specific bundle of rituals and beliefs but as a euphemism for all that is decent and upright. Even if he's stretching things a bit, the fact that he is able to make such an argument suggests that there is no reason that Islam, both inside and outside the United States, cannot remodel itself along Western liberal lines. If Islam is what Muslims say it is, then who is to say that the revamped, secularized version advanced by Abdul Rauf is incorrect? But is modernization really so easy? Here and there, he lets slip a few hints that the fit may not be as easy as he would like us to believe.

As Shariah-compliant as America may be, for instance, *What's Right With Islam* suggests that it could become even more so if it permitted Muslims to establish their own Shariah courts in such areas as family law, a notion that would no doubt cause feminists and others to blanch with horror. (Do we really want mullahs determining child custody and property division in divorce cases?) While arguing that Islam respects the rights of Christians and Jews, he acknowledges that it makes no allowance for those who reject the idea of a supreme being altogether. Even if mullahs do not go about issuing fatwas against atheists and freethinkers, the implication is that, even at its most liberal, Islam will remain deeply uneasy in a society in which many people regard skepticism and free expression as the highest virtues. Abdul Rauf also defends the veil, on the grounds "that covering up...can actually empower women by allowing them to rise above fashion, appearance and figure," provided, of course, that such covering up is "purely voluntary." But such words are extremely problematic in this context. While the hijab has served as a symbol of resistance to Western colonialism in Algeria, Palestine and elsewhere, it is simultaneously a sign of submission to an alternate form of authority in the shape of religion and patriarchy. It is a sign that the wearer has surrendered her free will. Yet volition is the one thing that a free individual cannot voluntarily relinquish.

But the real trouble comes when *What's Right With Islam* returns to those glorious days when Mohammed presided in person over the nascent Muslim community and

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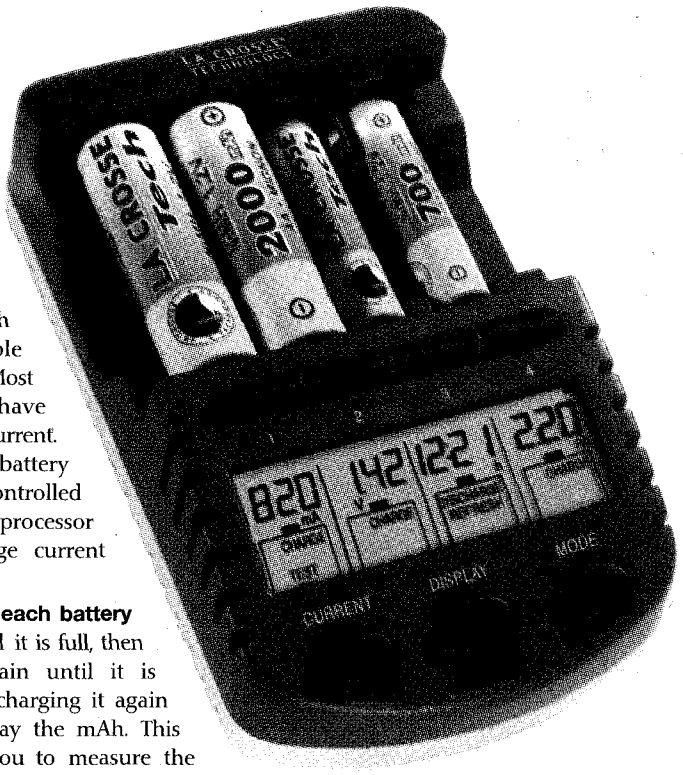

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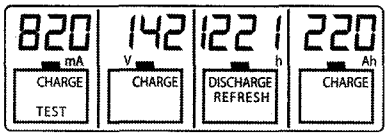

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justice supposedly reigned. "For Muslims," Abdul Rauf writes, "this era of life in the company of the Prophet in Medina remains the finest example and model for the good society on earth. Every revival attempt throughout Islamic history has been an attempt to recreate this ideal." What this means, in essence, is that whenever Islamic society goes awry, the automatic response among the faithful is to draw it back to some halcyon period in the seventh century, when the word of God was all that mattered. Later, Abdul Rauf argues that Islam is not directly to blame for the dreadful treatment of women in all too many Muslim countries. Rather, responsibility lies with Muslim jurists who "regarded the custom (*adah*, *'urf*), or common law of a society, as a source of law when the Quran or the *sunnah* was silent on an issue. Thus, what was custom in a particular time or place found its way into Islamic law."

Well, that's all right, then. Rather than mandating such oppression, all Islam has done is to provide a legal framework that has allowed it to continue for centuries on end. In writing about all that's right with Islam, Abdul Rauf has inadvertently put his finger on something that is deeply, grievously wrong.

The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization, by Richard Bulliet, a Middle East specialist at Columbia University, also seeks to bridge the gap between Islam and the West, although his approach is historical rather than theological. He is dismayed by the widening rift between the two camps; his solution is to try to patch things up by emphasizing all that Islam and Christianity have in common. If he can demonstrate that Islam and Christianity constitute not two civilizations but one, then a clash of civilizations between them becomes more and more unlikely.

To this end, Bulliet devotes considerable energy to showing how the two religions proceeded along parallel tracks during much of their formative period. Although Christianity would appear to be the older by some 600 years, he points out, the Western Church did not begin its historic expansion until after the barbarian invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries, which makes it roughly contemporaneous with the Arab expansion in the Middle East. As both faiths began to grow and develop, both gave rise to parallel bodies of religious specialists—monks, on the one hand, and the *ulema*, "possessors of religious knowledge," on the other. Not long after centers of Islamic learning known as madrasas appeared in the eleventh century, the first universities began taking shape in cities like Paris and Bologna—another parallel that Bulliet finds intriguing. As religious fervor grew, he notes, the two camps also saw the appearance of popular preaching societies, the Beghards and Beguines among the thirteenth-century French and Flemish, the Sufis among the Arabs and other Muslim nations.

Bin Laden's mentor, Zawahiri, has a 'world view comparable—but in reverse—to Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations.'

Bulliet's polemic is well intentioned, but it is more than a bit one-sided. In emphasizing the similarities between Muslim and Christian development, he winds up obscuring differences that are no less crucial. The madrasas and universities that he describes as parallel institutions, for instance, were actually polar opposites. As the historian Toby Huff has shown, madrasas were pillars of orthodoxy that allowed only one type of law to be taught (Islamic, needless to say) and one school of interpretation. Because rivals rarely engaged in face-to-face debate, students were not trained to wrestle with contradictions but to ignore them or, even worse, to regard them as threatening to the unity of Islam. European universities, by contrast, grew out of a guild tradition that allowed for a far greater degree of autonomy and self-governance. Rather than one type of law, they taught two, canon and Roman (or common law in the case of England). Disputations were central to the curriculum, and at the University of Paris, the oldest such institution north of the Alps, discussions were periodically thrown open so that students, teachers and visitors could raise any topic they wished. A series of thirteenth-century popes tried to prohibit the teaching of Aristotle but got nowhere; simultaneously, it was said of a religious leader in Damascus named Ibn al-Salah that he forbade the study of "logic and philosophy" on the grounds that both were sacrilegious and that "kings obeyed him." As important as it is to know what drew the two religions together, it is equally important to know what drove them apart.

Olivier Roy's *Globalized Islam* also tackles the East-West divide, although it chiefly succeeds in demonstrating the poverty of a certain kind of sociological approach in which ultra-fine distinctions are drawn, paradoxes are posed and the language grows increasingly cloudy and obscure. Roy has come a long way from the 1980s, when, as a cheerleader for the Afghan mujahedeen, he was assuring readers that the reimposition of Shariah in the Afghan countryside was nothing to worry about because "cutting off a thief's hand, or stoning couples caught in adultery, are very rare events." Still, his attitude in his latest study remains faintly exculpatory. He argues that "the debate on what the Koran says is sterile" and that "the role of Islam in shaping contemporary societies has been overemphasized." Because Islam is not a problem, therefore, there is no need to put it under the microscope and subject it to a thoroughgoing critique. For similar reasons, he maintains that the danger posed by Al Qaeda has been much exaggerated and that the group will never amount to more than a "security problem" because it "has no strategy in the true sense of the word."

Roy is dismissive of all forms of ideology, not only the theological variety but political as well ("democratization," he informs us at one point, "is a process, not a philosophy," a claim I find almost stunningly obtuse). Gilles Kepel, author of *The War for Muslim Minds*, is properly respectful and is therefore able to show the long and laborious process by which the Egyptian physician Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's ideological mentor, eventually concluded that striking at targets in New York or Madrid would be more profitable than striking at those closer to home. A longstanding figure in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Zawahiri spent years pondering why such actions as the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981 or the fundamentalist revolt in Algeria in the 1990s came to naught. The regimes were shaken but kept their feet, while in the end it was the fundamentalists who ran aground. His conclusion was that while such feats caused a big splash locally, they did little to unite the Islamic *umma*, or community, as a whole. The only way this could be done was to strike outside the *umma* at Russia, the United States or the other Western powers. The upshot, Kepel writes, was "a world view comparable—but in reverse—to Samuel Huntington's famous clash of civilizations." Where Huntington sought to shore up the forces on one side of the divide, Zawahiri was working just as hard to unify those on the other.

Does this show a lack of strategic thinking? Obviously, Zawahiri played his cards wrong in Afghanistan, where the Taliban

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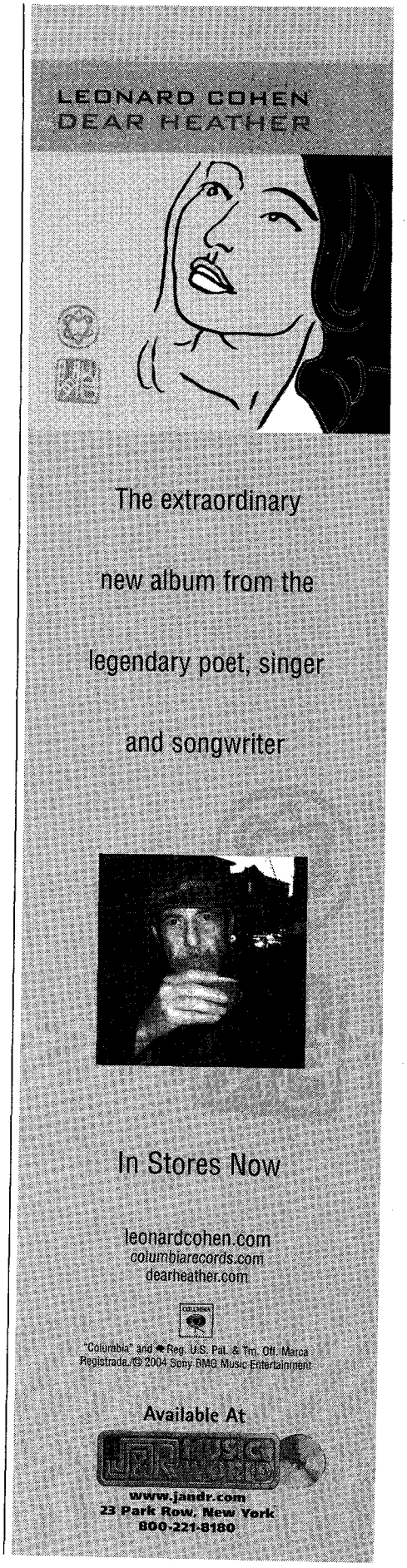
regime, which he was counting on for protection, collapsed under the American onslaught more quickly than many people expected. But the struggle over Chechnya is going along swimmingly from Al Qaeda's point of view while, with Russia drawing close to the Israelis and postinvasion Iraq turning into a happy hunting ground for jihadists of every shape and description, the "civilizational" dividing line is clearly hardening. Did Zawahiri underestimate the fury of the US response to 9/11, as Olivier Roy suggests? Or has he succeeded in drawing Bush into a war in Iraq that the Administration cannot possibly win? I think it's the latter, and I suspect Kepel does, too.

The War for Muslim Minds is something of a corrective to Kepel's previous book, *Jihad*, published in 2002, which argued that Islamic fundamentalism had peaked and that it would "have much difficulty reversing its trail of decline as it confronts twenty-first-century civilization." The title of his new book is unfortunate since it is not only Muslim minds that are at stake in the current conflict, but it is otherwise a masterpiece of political explication. Kepel is especially good on the symmetries between the Islamic fundamentalists and their Western equivalents, the neoconservatives. Where the fundamentalists had it easy—all they had to do was figure out a way to unite the *umma* against the West—Washington has been faced with the far more difficult task of pumping up support for Israel without ruffling the feathers of the Saudis to the point where they cut off the flow of oil. The solution hit upon in the 1980s and '90s was to divert the Muslim world's attention by encouraging an anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan while staging a spurious "peace process" in Israel/Palestine to buy time. The strategy worked brilliantly for a while. But when Al Qaeda stepped into the vacuum created by the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the United States was slow to respond. "Al Qaeda" literally means "the base," which suggests an actual military installation that the United States could pound with the usual array of smart bombs and cruise missiles. But Al Qaeda was really more "a database," Kepel writes, one "that connected jihadists all over the world via the Internet." It was a postmodern organization married to a premodern worldview. Yet the neocons, firmly in control under Bush II, preferred to do battle with a conventional military force, which is one reason they declared war on Saddam Hussein.

Fanaticism on one side has been met and matched by equally blind fanaticism on the other. Still, whatever the sins of the neocons, the reader by this point is likely thanking his or her lucky stars to be living in a region shaped by a faith in which, in the immortal words of John Ashcroft, "God sends His son to die for you" instead of "requir[ing] you to send your son to die for Him." Where the Koran instructs the faithful not only to "smite" the enemy "above their necks," but to cut off their fingers for good measure (Surah 8:12), the New Testament recommends turning the other cheek. Doesn't this tell us all we need to know about the difference between a warlike Middle East and a peaceful, enlightened West?

Not quite. Pacific as the Gospels may be, the religion they gave rise to has been remarkably violent. According to the historian William McNeill, Western Europe during the so-called Age of Faith was the most warlike civilization on earth, with the exception of Japan. The Arabs were stunned by the brutality of the Crusaders when they invaded Palestine in the eleventh century. The "parfait gentil knights" were bad enough, but the fanatical hordes known as the Tafurs were even worse. Barefoot and ragged, armed only with clubs, sticks, hoes and other crude implements, they charged into battle gnashing their teeth, feasting afterward on the roasted flesh of whatever poor Muslim they managed to get their hands on. Yet the knights were so impressed with these holy cannibals that they gave them the honor of being the first ones over the wall during the climactic assault on Jerusalem in 1099.

How does loving thy neighbor lead to drowning him in blood? This is the question that Shadia Drury considers in her new study *Terror and Civilization: Christianity, Politics, and the Western Psyche*. Her attitude is refreshingly direct. The standard line concerning the burning of witches and heretics, the killing of gynecologists, the persecution of gays and the slaughter at the World Trade Center is that such horrors are not the fault of the Bible or the Koran but of crazed individuals who twist their message of love into the opposite. But Drury, a political scientist at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, is having none of it. "It is time to ask if these sacred texts do not lend themselves to the political extremism, violence, and intolerance perpetrated in their name," she declares. Instead of accusing the suicide bombers and anti-abortionists of misinterpreting such texts, her modest proposal is that perhaps their crime is interpreting all too correctly texts



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that everyone else either extols or ignores.

It is to Drury's immense credit that she takes aim not at Islam, which has gotten a pretty bad press of late, but at Christianity. Although everyone remembers Christ's line about the meek inheriting the earth, she points out that the Gospels are in fact studded with apocalyptic warnings of the terrible fate awaiting those whose only sin is to question whether he is the messiah. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" a decidedly ungentle Jesus tells such doubters at one point (Matthew 23:33); "if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," he declares at another (John 8:24). For Drury, such words go to the heart of what is most troubling about Christianity. Telling people how to behave is one thing, but telling them what to believe means invading every intellectual nook and cranny in order to root out contrary ideas. It means robbing the individual of his last shred of privacy. From Christ's demand for complete psychological surrender, Drury contends that it was only a step to the great heresy hunts, book burnings and religious massacres of the Middle Ages. As late as the early twentieth century, she notes, Pope Pius X required every Catholic diocese to appoint a "vigilance committee...to find out and report on writings and persons tainted with the heresy of Modernism"—to seek out not only those advocating Modernism but those who had allowed it to color their thinking. "The totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century were equally preoccupied with the control of thought," Drury writes. "But in comparison to their more successful antecedent (i.e., the Church), they were mere amateurs."

Drury's argument, like Bulliet's in *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, is well intentioned but also does not stand up to intellectual scrutiny. Of course, Christianity is about belief—this has been its great strength. Previously, the Palestinian ideological system that we now know as Judaism was all about law, how to interpret it, how to apply it, where it comes from, etc. But Saint Paul, the great innovator of the age, stood things on their head by replacing the old doctrine of obedience with a new doctrine of faith. Instead of requiring Christ's non-Jewish followers to obey Jewish law, he required them to believe, which in some respects was much more difficult. The result was to open a new front in the ideological war. Not only were members of the new Christian ecumene expected to wrestle with others' ideas, they were expected to wrestle with their own. Not only did Christianity expand outward, like Islam, but it expanded inward as well. While this led to new forms of tyranny, it also led to new kinds of self-criticism and to a more dynamic concept of the human personality. This is why left-wing thinkers from Engels and Karl Kautsky to Pier Paolo Pasolini have found early Christianity so fascinating—because it engaged and mobilized the individual psyche in a new way in order to transform society.

Drury is not a Marxist, alas, but an unabashed liberal who thinks that "the religion of Jesus is zealous, immoderate, and unwise" and that, as a result, "Jesus cannot be totally absolved of the savage history of the Church." Rather than mobilizing the individual psyche, she is out to shield it from bishops and left-wing agitators alike—to privatize it, in a sense. But this leads to a curious lapse. Because she thinks that what a person believes is his or her own business, she never gets around to asking the most elementary question concerning the nature of Christian beliefs, which is to say whether they are true. For her, Christianity is a collection of values and effects, some decidedly negative. But it never seems to occur to her that one reason the Church became so oppressive is that it continued to insist on a series of false ideas concerning the existence of God and the nature of Christ long after European society was ready to move on. The problem was not belief per se but belief that was increasingly at war with reality.

Fortunately, these are exactly the sorts of issues that Sam Harris confronts in *The End of Faith*. Harris is a doctoral student in neuroscience at UCLA, yet the nice thing is that there is still something of the undergraduate about him. Everyone knows the type, the smart aleck in the back of the room who isn't afraid to raise questions that everyone else is too polite to ask, questions like: If bad ideas lead to bad acts, then why should we allow individuals to entertain ideas that are incorrect? If a friend mistakenly believes he is dying of cancer, shouldn't we disabuse him of the notion so that he doesn't do something drastic, like throw himself under a train? If he believes, similarly, that unbelievers are destined for hell, shouldn't we disabuse him of that so he isn't tempted to speed the process by shooting or blowing them up? Harris recounts the tale of a thirteenth-century bishop of Toulouse, who, on hearing that an old woman had fallen victim to the heresy of Catharism, had her carried in her sickbed to a nearby field and burned alive. Considering all those souls

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who would have been robbed of their chance of salvation had the infection been allowed to spread, the good bishop felt he had no choice. On the basis of the fiery prose in *The End of Faith*, it is evident that Harris believes we should root out heresy—defined from a modern, rationalist, scientific point of view, of course—with no less vigor.

I agree and would happily nominate him for the job of rationalist Grand Inquisitor if *The End of Faith* did not suffer from some serious intellectual shortcomings.

Harris is proof that Trotsky's famous "law of combined and uneven development" does not apply only to czarist Russia. Harris is well informed in some areas, but embarrassingly bereft in others. While he knows a fair amount about religion and philosophy, he has little feel for politics and even less for the ironies of historical development. Religion, as he sees it, is a bad idea that has lodged itself under the human skull and must be driven out. "It is difficult to imagine a set of beliefs more suggestive of mental illness than those that lie at the heart of many of our religious traditions," he writes. Perhaps. Yet he fails to understand the process by which ancient thinkers, struggling to understand the cosmos, would come up with hypotheses that seem ludicrous in our day but were nonetheless a significant advance in their own. Citing the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, he wisecracks that not only can Jesus be "eaten in the form of a cracker" as a consequence, but that "a few Latin words spoken over your favorite Burgundy, and you can drink his blood as well." Yet transubstantiation was an attempt to make sense of Jesus' death, an event that Christians mistakenly believed had transformed the cosmos but that we now know merely helped to transform Western society. If Harris had any idea of the blood and passion expended over such doctrines, he might hesitate before engaging in low-brow, frat-house humor.

Like the Ayn Randians, *The End of Faith* is an example of how atheism can as easily propel one to the right as to the left. In his naïveté, Harris approvingly quotes various neocons and neolibs (Samuel Huntington, Bernard Lewis, Daniel Goldhagen, Fareed Zakaria, Paul Berman and so on) without any sense, so far as the reader can tell, as to why they might be considered controversial. Even worse, he advances a rationalist argument in support of Bush's jihad. His reasoning is all too simple: Osama bin Laden is the world's leading example of religion run amok. Whatever its shortcom-

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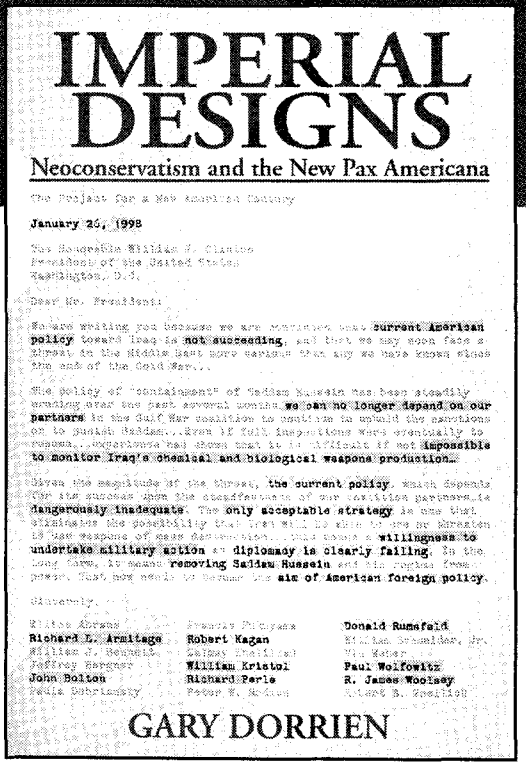

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Gary Dorrien is the Parfet Distinguished Professor at Kalamazoo College. His eleven books include *The Neoconservative Mind* and the first two volumes of a projected trilogy, *The Making of American Liberal Theology.*

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ings, the West is a paragon of reason by comparison. Therefore, whatever America does to rein in Islamic fundamentalism is worthy of support. If bin Laden and his ilk "cannot be captured," Harris writes, "otherwise tolerant people may be justified in killing them in self-defense. This is what the United States attempted in Afghanistan, and it is what we and other Western powers are bound to attempt, at even greater cost to ourselves and innocents abroad, elsewhere in the Muslim world."

Bin Laden thinks the Koran is the word of God and has killed thousands. Bush thinks the same of the Bible and has so far killed several times more in Iraq. His top aides, according to Ron Suskind's recent article in *The New York Times Magazine*, are contemptuous of what they call "the reality-based community." So who is living in a more dangerous fantasy world? The times are so out of joint that even sound ideas like secularism and science lead people astray. ■

ART

Darkness Visible

ARTHUR C. DANTO

FRANCESCA WOODMAN

The remarkably gifted artist Francesca Woodman abruptly ended her brief life and career on January 19, 1981, leaping to her death from a window in her New York studio. Francesca was 22 years old. The work of her eight productive years, to which a small show at the Marian Goodman Gallery on West 57th Street is currently paying tribute, would have been magical and enigmatic whatever her fate, but the suicide caused viewers to wonder if it was foreshadowed in her images, which were mostly of herself. The relationship between an artist's life and work is always tentative, even when the life seems obviously to have been the subject of the work, as in the case of Marcel Proust. The best reason for reading his biography is to learn how different the life and the great novel are, despite the internal relationship between the two. The difference between the author and the narrator of *Remembrance of Things Past* is a matter of intricate interpretation, though both are named Marcel. And, of course, the novel does not end with the death of its narrator; it ends, rather, with his resolution to begin to write it. "Death is not an event in life," Wittgenstein said. "Death is not lived through."

Whether or not Francesca's suicide is projected in her art, the work seems revelatory of her inner life, not only because she is typically the model for the photographs of which it is made up but because of the way she pictures herself. The photographs are of a young woman, often nude, often wearing the kinds of vintage clothes or intimate garments that Francesca's friends say she wore. They typically show her alone in the largely empty rooms, with stained, peeling walls and the odd piece of secondhand furniture, that she used as studios or living spaces or both. So people have pored over the prints with forensic eyes, looking for diagnostic clues. I must say the "evidence" strikes me as pretty crude. In one she shows herself in a bathtub, which a hermeneutical sleuth pounces on as metaphorically—a coffin! But models have been shown in bathtubs from Degas through Toulouse-Lautrec to Bonnard, without anyone thinking that mortality is a subtext. Or did the critic have in mind the fact that Seneca committed suicide in his bathtub, fearing a worse end at the hands of his dangerous disciple, the Emperor Nero? In fact, there is very little evidence in the photographs of one of the most important truths of Francesca's life: that she was a photographer, and indeed the very photographer who took the pictures. In a portrait taken in her studio in Providence, Rhode Island, she sits behind a large, boxy camera on a tripod. But it is by a friend, George Lange. The camera, so far as I have been able to discover, is never a prop in any of her sparsely furnished spaces. There are not even overlooked signs, like a telltale cable, except in the very early picture *Self-Portrait at Thirteen*, taken when she could have been as old as 17, judging by the date. It is a self-portrait as a 13-year-old girl, whose chief

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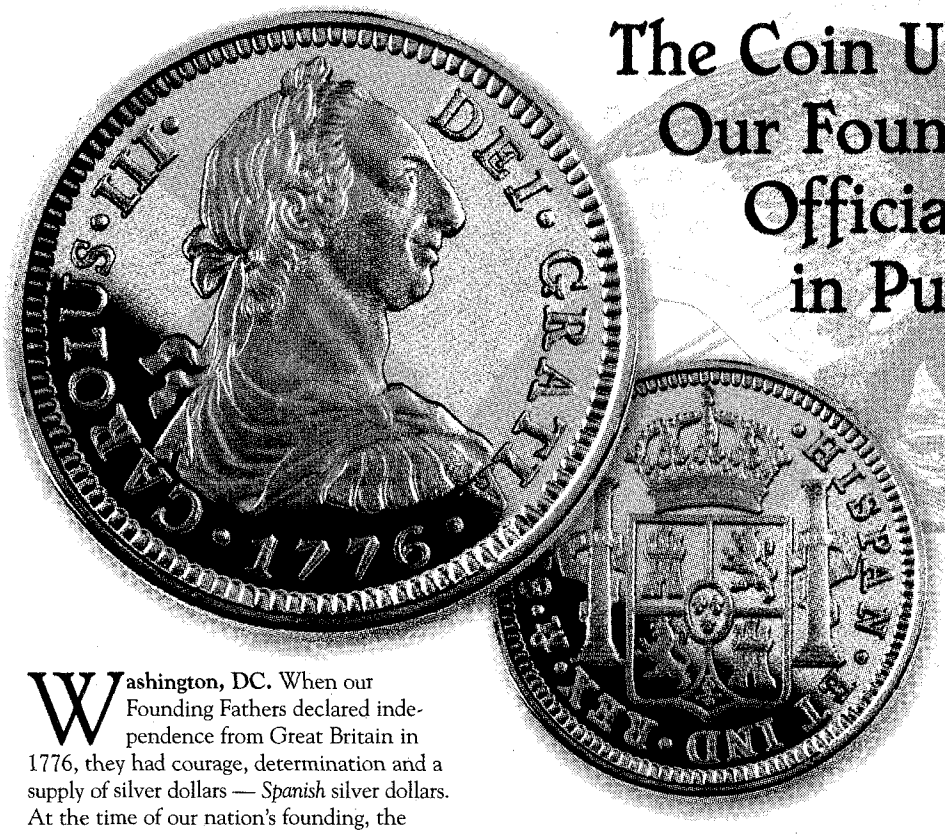

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feature is her hair, which covers all her other features, and whose most conspicuous garment is a cable-knit sweater. It is a cable-knit image: The cable is deliberately left in the print to make the pun. Francesca was as fastidious about planting signs and meaning as a Flemish master. If there were so much as the shadow of a camera, it reflected an artistic decision. As it is, the photographic apparatus is always external to the image, though certainly internal to her life.

I have referred to Francesca by her first name, though I never knew her personally. I did get to know her parents, George and Betty Woodman, both of them important artists in their own right. Betty is one of the major ceramists of our time, and I have written about her work on several occasions. George had been part of the Pattern and Decoration Movement of the late 1970s, but is today best known for his own frequently exhibited photographs. By 1986, Francesca's work had become very widely known, with major exhibitions everywhere. She was the subject of studies by major critics, European and American. Her work, which seemed almost obsessively addressed to her gender and sexuality, coincided with the intense intellectual preoccupation these themes had awakened throughout the art world. The circumstances of her death gave her life an almost Rimbaldian aura. It is impossible to view her work without being drawn into the vast questions it raises about life, art and the meaning and embodiment of sex.

The Woodmans have assumed the responsibilities associated with shepherding their daughter's artistic estate as her fame has spread and, alas, have had to deal with the inevitable myths that attach to artists whose work cries out for—yet also suffers from—biographical explanation. I have never discussed their views on Francesca's death with them, but I have a pretty vivid sense of her life. She was born in Colorado, where her parents taught art at the university in Boulder. It was and is an artistic household—her brother Charlie is also an artist—and Francesca grew up artistically literate, to the point that one need hardly seek outside the culture of her home to find such influences as may have inflected her imagery. The family is Italophile—hence her name—and in 1969 purchased a house near Florence, where they continue to spend part of each year. Francesca attended the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, spent a year in Rome and finally moved to New York. She made her first photographs when she was at boarding school, and seems to me to have been instantly an artist. In that respect she reminds me of Robert Mapplethorpe, whose first photographs have an immediate authority, though he was suspicious of the importance of photography as a medium. Their somewhat cognate visions were already present at the beginning. Francesca's vision always informs her work, in Boulder, Providence, Rome and New York. It is like a personal signature. One has the sense that she could have done nothing but what she did do. Her work unfolds over time like the *oeuvre* of a brilliant and precocious poet, like Keats or Rimbaud, whose voice is present in every line.

The photographers of Francesca's generation—Mapplethorpe, Cindy Sherman and Nan Goldin come to mind especially—all used themselves as subjects, in varying ways. Like Francesca, Sherman used herself almost exclusively as her model, but her photographs are in no sense self-portraits, and are importantly not of her. Particularly in the *Untitled Film Stills* of the late 1970s, Sherman's photographs are of the different personas she assumed as masks (which is what "persona" originally meant): young girl mooning over a letter, jaded housewife, young dancer, nurse, vagrant, office worker, vamp, aging glamour girl and so forth. By contrast, Nan Goldin has never portrayed herself as anyone but herself in what is often referred to as "Nan's world." Thus she shows herself with a black eye, hung on her by her boyfriend, Brian; or in a train going someplace for rehabilitation; or making love. Even when Goldin appears in the costume of a dominatrix, it's a picture of herself dressed up, not standing in for a dominatrix, the way Sarah Siddons stands in for the Tragic Muse in Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait. The same rule applies to Mapplethorpe, who, even when he portrays himself as a faun or as a young girl, is always recognizable as himself. Francesca is closer to Sherman, it seems to me, in that she never shows herself as herself. The difference is that she always shows herself as the same character—the character of a young woman in various *mise-en-scènes*. The work, in other words, has a subtle fictive dimension, which is all too easily overlooked by those in search of biographical clues about her tragic end. We have to distinguish between Francesca the artist and "Francesca" her character, as we do between Marcel Proust and the narrator "Marcel"—or between Franz Kafka and the protagonist of *The Trial*, "Josef K."

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Why, then, did Francesca always photograph herself, if not to reveal herself? Asked this question, she replied that she was always available; it was easier for her to show what she had in mind than to try to get a model to do it. But my conjecture is that she invented a character, whose fictive life was in many ways a metaphor for her own inner life. She adored the novels of Colette, who published a series of largely autobiographical works in which the central character is named Claudine: *Claudine à l'école*, *Claudine à Paris*, *Claudine en ménage*, *Claudine s'en va*. I have given Francesca's character the name "Francesca" just to underscore the problem of sorting out what pertains to the artist and the young woman in the photographs. Let's then say that there are four short pictorial novels—Francesca in Boulder, Francesca in Providence, Francesca in Rome, Francesca in New York. Interestingly, Francesca rarely if ever shows "Francesca" as an artist. It's not clear what exactly "Francesca" does, in fact. The picture could almost be seen as dreams that "Francesca" has, or as symbolic enactments of her inner thoughts and feelings. She is nearly always by herself.

The gelatin silver prints are quite small, which goes with the extreme intimacy they establish with the viewer, implying that they could be printed as illustrations in a book and held in the hand. They are characteristically in sepia or silver tones, which give them a slightly dated, almost Victorian feeling, as if to establish the fictive "once upon a time" framework of a fairy tale. I love one of the Providence images, done sometime between 1975 and 1978, where "Francesca" is shown at the extreme right, wearing what looks like a short robe—it may be a dress—over a nightgown. She is looking out of the photograph at us, but her arms are extended toward the dark corner of the room, where there are two doors, one of which opens onto darkness. Her expression, slightly triumphant, is like that of a magician, opening a door by an act of telekinesis. Her cheek is illuminated by a light behind her, but the light seems to be dissolving the hems of her garments, as if she is disappearing—or is somehow only partially materialized. She looks like a child, with long blond hair, on the cusp of adolescence. It is an exceedingly magical image.

In another print her legs, arm and belly—which is all that we see of her—are naked. She seems to be emerging from the wall, tearing the flowered wallpaper into large, uneven pieces as she achieves embodiment. In yet another, she is lying on the floor next to a window, dissolved in light, with only her legs fully emerged into actuality. It is like the portrait described by Balzac in *The Unknown Masterpiece*, in which only a single foot is legible.

Francesca was at home in the darkroom, unlike her peers among the 1970s photographers. Mapplethorpe was successful enough to have his own darkroom technician, though he was fastidious about his prints. He was a collector of vintage photographs, with a keen sense for the aesthetics of surface. So far as I know, Sherman and Goldin always had their work developed and printed, though they naturally were concerned with controlling how the prints came out. But Francesca needed to intervene in order to find ways of representing the spiritual state of her character. The final effect is that of a photograph taken in the parlor of a medium, in the midst of a séance. Whether Francesca Woodman explicitly entertained such beliefs is something I cannot speak to.

What I think it safe to say is that a recurring motif is "Francesca" undergoing some form of metamorphosis, from one state of being into another. In a set of images made when she was resident at the

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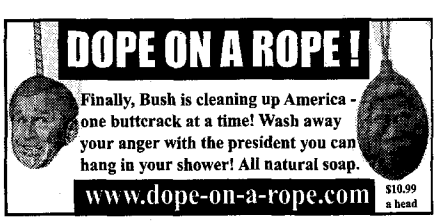
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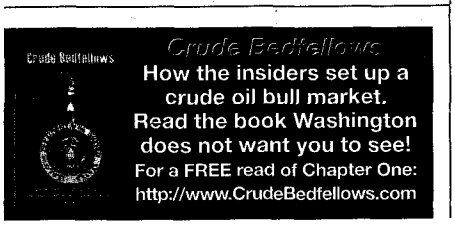
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MacDowell Colony, she pictures herself in a stand of birch trees. Sometimes she appears nude, with strips of birch bark around her arms. At other times she is wearing a dress, but without arms—already a trunk. In other images she wears the dress and displays her arms encased in birch bark. It feels as if she is enacting the myth of Daphne being transformed into a tree. In one image, she shows herself holding a small cylinder of birch, the way a saint is shown with the attribute of her martyrdom. One could not have spent much time in Rome without soaking up such ideas. In one of her Roman images, she stands, with only her parted bare legs showing, with her feet planted at the ends of two roughly dug trenches, which reflect the legs, as if she has risen from the ground. I am deeply moved by an image in which she has flattened herself, nude, against a wall, with dirt on her legs, as if she has undergone resurrection. The expression on her face is almost beatific.

This beautiful, haunting installation at the Marian Goodman Gallery will be on view only until November 13. But her images are not difficult to find on the Internet. In the gallery's catalogue, *Francesca Woodman: Photographs 1975–1980*, the photographs are, unless otherwise indicated, reproduced at their exact size. This will give you enough visual information to see what she was getting at, though of course it is difficult to reproduce the exquisite surfaces of the photographs themselves. In 1980 she began to work in a larger, even a much larger format. The catalogue reproduces *Girl With Weed*, printed on blue-print paper. It seems to be a narrative, told in three sequential images, in the last of which The Girl, naked and triumphant, holds the weed up, like Salomé holding the head of John the Baptist by his hair. The intimacy has, of course, been forfeited. It is impossible to say whether its sacrifice was leading to something greater. ■

FILMS

War Games

STUART KLAWANS

TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE • HEARTS AND MINDS

In the players' handbooks that once circulated among *commedia dell'arte* troupes, the wandering actors of early modern Italy used to set down inventories of the *lazzi*, or comic turns, that were their stock in trade. Among these routines, out of which entire performances could be constructed, was the *lazzo del bastonado*, or what we might call, in American showbiz tradition, the "shtick of the stick." The theatrical scholar Mel Gordon, who has compiled and translated the old *commedia* handbooks, cites a concise description of this *lazzo*: When your audience becomes restive, you may win back their attention by whacking another actor with a good strong length of wood.

Anyone who has put on a puppet show for children will recognize the soundness of this advice. Indeed, historical researchers into the fortunes of Punch and Judy have confirmed that the use of the *bastonado* is especially funny when it causes a baby to fly wailing out of its mother's arms. This observation may lead us on to consider the various infantile *lazzi*, which include suffocation, throttling and the beating of a child's brains against the proscenium arch, all of which have attained a just venerability.

The mind, convulsed, grasps for such precedents when contemplating the new political comedy *Team America: World Police*, an animation featuring a roster of marionettes, plus two house cats and a cockroach. Prominent among this cast are puppets representing the likes of Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Janeane Garofalo and Michael Moore—people who support *The Nation* and its causes, and who for this good work are incinerated, decapitated, eviscerated and dynamited in effigy, with effects that are as bloody as the filmmakers, in their glee, can muster. Do I justify my helpless laughter—do I deepen my understanding—by tracing these comedic enormities to a reputable past? Or am I forgetting that tradition also endorses the practice of female circumcision, the myth of Jewish blood lust and the alcoholic yowling,

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at sports events, of nationalist ditties? In short, am I talking about artistic heritage or the *lazzo del fascismo*?

On the side of art, I note that *Team America* is principally the work of Trey Parker and Matt Stone, who could be called the "creators" of the beloved television series *South Park*, if God had only made the world flat. Parker and Stone's fundamental shtick in *South Park* is to express lavishly rude subject matter through abjectly simple drawings and animation. This marriage of the overstated and the underachieved is also their technique in *Team America*. The figures are now three-dimensional, by virtue of being marionettes; the settings are clever, colorful dioramas, rather than crude backgrounds; and the budget, at a reported $30 million, is breathtaking by the standards of *South Park*, or for that matter a family of four in Gary, Indiana. Nevertheless, the basic joke of *Team America* develops from the film's bluntness. Although the title characters are said to be an elite force of military heroes, outfitted with the most elaborate spyware and armaments, they are, most nakedly, a set of plastic figurines, which bobble at the end of visible strings and move their faces like theme park Abe Lincolns. Had Parker and Stone credited Leon Trotsky as their co-writer, they could not have come up with a more blatant visualization of the concept "imperialist puppets."

The story, since you ask, concerns Team America's efforts to foil a terrorist plot that threatens to be a thousand times worse than 9/11. (You do the math.) Joining the cadre as its new member is Gary, a Broadway actor who is recruited for his skill at imposture. Costumed and made up like Ariel Sharon's ugliest nightmare, the better to infiltrate the hordes of turbaned terrorists, Gary zooms with his teammates toward the bazaar in Cairo, while the soundtrack blasts a defiantly patriotic metal-rock anthem with lyrics too obscene to print in this fuckin' magazine.

Note who gets the *bastonado* at this stage. For its opening gesture, *Team America* thumps the very life out of George W. Bush and his supporters, translating their worldview onto the screen with brutal literal-mindedness. Them: swarthy murderers, who speak a phlegm-clotted language. Us: clean-cut, can-do winners, whose pretty heads are a little too big for our bodies and whose eyes are slightly outsized for our heads. You may also note how this physical disproportion makes the Team America figures seem childlike. Embodiments of a mentality that is both simple and insular, they treat everything outside

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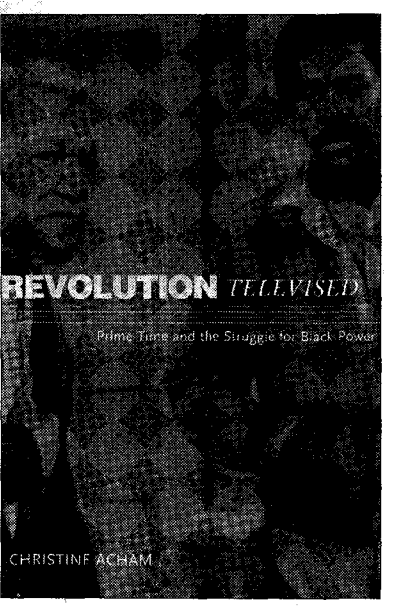

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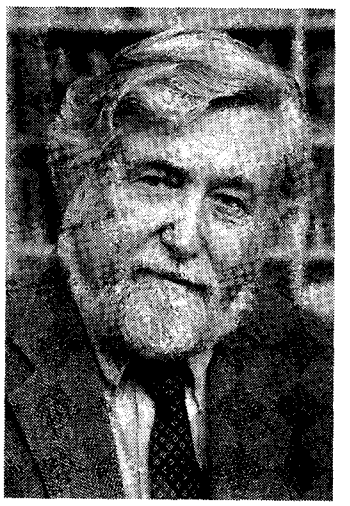

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Two Hindus

1. Sarasvati

Dark, dark—we can't make the room dark enough
to deceive her small and unsleeping self.
She sings like bottled silver in the dark,
and silence only proves she is not light-safe,
unseen, onrushing, glancing herself awake.

He comes to fix the darkness he has made,
our slim Israeli handyman named Gad.
A crocus light leaks round him at the equinox,
until the floor is freaked purple and gold.
The bold sun climbs past Doctor Shade. Light speaks;

it rises like her blonde hair to the comb,
crackling in spurts of Pentecostal flame
around her head, which summons to its work
the language of evolving self and time.
On her brow in the garden was a mark

of saffron (I watched from the shadows today):
moist as the petal-sheath, as veined and milky.
So Brahma once from his own body struck
a daughter and grew four faces, so he
could look at her and yet not seem to look.

2. A Prayer to Ganesh

for Mike Tompkins

On West 96th Street, outside the Ayurveda Center,
dirty snow still dimples the god's bronze thighs
where he sits, plump as a gulab-jamun in rosewater,
a delight to his mother Parvati in her cave of ice.

First-worshipped, fashioned out of her skin's gold dander,
lord of servants and elephant-headed keeper of doorways,
liminal god between the past and the future
who removes obstacles or sets them in place,

smiling portmanteau god, who, in father and mother,
found and circled the entire universe,
incline toward me the gray fan of your ear.
Return him from the exile of Lord Siva's

terrible rage for intelligence and order,
from the *shakti* of a mother who never dies.
Bring him back from where the Ganga threads from the glacier.
Release him from the discipline of his prayers,

from the loneliness of his concentration, or
make me the single mind equal to his,
though I write with a broken tusk on birch-bark, far
from the fields of eternal balance where he is.

Karl Kirchwey

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themselves as a target to be fired at freely, while inside their own circle they think only of their tender emotions—as if the cockpits of fighter jets were so many junior high school lunchrooms, littered with semi-secret notes about who wants to go out.

Add to these traits a preoccupation with show business—that is to say, an inability to distinguish pretense from reality—and the members of Team America may be summed up as dangerous idiots. Let all *Nation* readers say amen, and laugh themselves silly when the puppets strip down for their sex scene. Forty years ago, the great critic Parker Tyler argued that the avant-garde film was essentially a peep show, exposing to public view those aspects of life that society, by consensus, sought to conceal. Today, by consensus, Paramount Pictures can release *Team America* into the malls. What was left to conceal, so that the rating could be eased from NC-17 to R, I truly cannot imagine.

But then, despite the squawks of America's many God-botherers, our society no longer troubles itself to suppress the facts about sex, or most other subjects. Our consensus now maintains social equilibrium by the more refined method of suppressing forms of thought. Pick up a copy of *USA Today*—I dare you—and you will see this work done in plain sight, on the editorial page, by means of the terms "left" and "right." No matter how preposterously ill matched, the positions that are so labeled are presented as equivalent choices: the Coke and Pepsi of a marketplace of ideas that exists nowhere but on that same newspaper page. This is "balance."

And in a movie whose characters literally dangle from strings, "balance" turns out to be fatal. Because the members of Team America are reckless bozos of the right, Parker and Stone evidently felt obliged to invent an opposing group on the left. Enter the effective heavies—Moore, Sarandon, Robbins, Garofalo—who foolishly deny that real danger exists in the world and that real force must be used.

Of course, you will refuse to believe that I am taking this seriously. (Why would anyone think seriously about a multimillion-dollar commercial product with a political theme, marketed coast to coast just before an election?) If you are a *South Park* fan, you might also refuse to believe that Parker and Stone really mean to demonize something they call the "Film Actors Guild." Surely the guys are just scoring a satiric point about the news media's reduction of activist politics to celebrity gossip; surely the caricatures of Alec Baldwin, Sean Penn and Matt Damon are intended as further outlandish realizations of the Bush worldview. Besides, audiences can be counted on to feel some resentment of the good fortune of movie stars, and therefore won't mind seeing them get whacked with a stick. The leaders of MoveOn.org would make much less satisfying villains.

All true—and yet if you sit through *Team America* rather than hear it described, you can't mistake the filmmakers' great pleasure in torturing the Hollywood do-gooders. You can't overlook the vehemence with which Parker and Stone keep spitting out the acronym for "Film Actors Guild"; nor can you ignore their tilting of the balance toward the plot's designated good guys, who are ultimately no dumber than the heroes of a Jerry Bruckheimer film and who win out just as gloriously. For people who pride themselves on being irreverent, Parker and Stone give in thoroughly to convention.

They do it with reason, of course. The conventions work; they were boffo in sixteenth-century Italy, and they're boffo today. That's why, if you go to see *Team America*, you will probably walk out happily sated with laughter and humming one of the offensive show tunes. But if you see this movie on Election Day, you might recall that the real-life leader of Team America is responsible for the deaths of more than 10,000 Iraqi civilians in a war that need not have been fought. The worst that the real Tim Robbins ever did was mess up *The Cradle Will Rock*.

These thoughts lead me, naturally, to Peter Davis's masterwork, *Hearts and Minds*.

It is one of the great feats of filmmaking: a coolly comprehensive assessment of America's war against Vietnam, completed while the shots were still being fired. Since the film's first showing in 1974, and its subsequent receipt in 1975 of the Oscar for best documentary, an entire generation has grown up without being able to watch this picture on the screen. Parker and Stone belong to this generation, which never saw the realities of American power revealed in a movie house but was steeped in counterfantasies, which soon came flooding into theaters as if to wash away Davis's achievement: *First Blood*, *Top Gun*, *Missing in Action* and their innumerable knockoffs.

Some subjects, America does suppress.

Fortunately, the Film Archive of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has spent two years restoring *Hearts and Minds*, and Rialto Pictures is putting the new prints into national release, starting with a run at New York's Film Forum (through November 4). If you are of an older generation and lived through the years of the Vietnam War, you need to see this movie; only a picture this uncompromising can shake the dust off your memories and emotions. And if you are of a younger generation, you also need to see *Hearts and Minds*. It will shock you not only with the truths it brings to light but with the force of its truly balanced filmmaking.

Davis got all sides into the movie: American Presidents, generals and planners; Vietnamese leaders, prostitutes and peasants; French colonial officials; US veterans, from the heartbroken to the vehemently prowar; mourners; flag-wavers; coffin-makers; amputees; even a high school football team, whose coach helps set the tone for the movie by instructing his players to kill. By creating a counterpoint among these many voices, Davis composed a work that is simultaneously an exposé of the history of the war, an exploration of American martial culture and a deeply humane portrait of the victims.

In *Hearts and Minds*, Peter Davis managed to understand everything. Then, against convention, he forgave nothing. ■

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ALBUQUERQUE *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP meeting regularly. Call (505) 797-1455 or e-mail h.aarli@comcast.net for more information.

HUNTINGTON, LI, NY, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is looking for new members. Call John Valenti, (631) 549-3926.

BRONX (RIVERDALE)/WESTCHESTER, NY, *NATION* DISCUSSION group meets one afternoon a month. For further information please phone Florence Gold at (718) 549-1601.

ASHEVILLE, NC, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP MEETING. Contact Jerry McKinney for more information: Call (828) 452-7603 or e-mail jaymac_enterprises@yahoo.com.

CINCINNATI *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP meets regularly. Call Judith or Herbert Shapiro at (513) 861-4641.

EASTERN OKLAHOMA *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP looking for members. Please contact Howard Kelley at (918) 627-9136.

OKLAHOMA CITY *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP meets regularly at the Full Circle Book Store, 50 Penn Place, 1900 NW Expressway St. Please call Hal Cousins at (405) 677-3623 or e-mail Bob Nichols, bobnichols@cox.net for further information.

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE HOUSTON *NATION* DISCUSSION group? Contact Charles Mauch at (713) 524-2492 or e-mail chasmauch@aol.com.

MONTPELIER, VT, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is meeting. For information call (802) 229-9918 or e-mail lnichol@together.net.

GIG HARBOR, WA, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is seeking new members. Call Bill Nerin (253) 851-8888 or e-mail nerins@earthlink.net.

SOUTHERN VERMONT *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is forming, centered in Wilmington and the surrounding towns of Marlboro, Halifax, Whitingham, Readsboro, Woodford and West Dover, but all interested persons from the Brattleboro, Greenfield and Bennington areas invited to join. For information please call Bob Silverman, (802) 464-5149.

NORTH JERSEY *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP: Coordinator is Trudy Anschuetz, phone (973) 746-4135 e-mail TGOBLUE1@aol.com.

BRANDON, FL, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING. Contact Mary, (813) 689-8859.

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The Nation, Classified Department, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003

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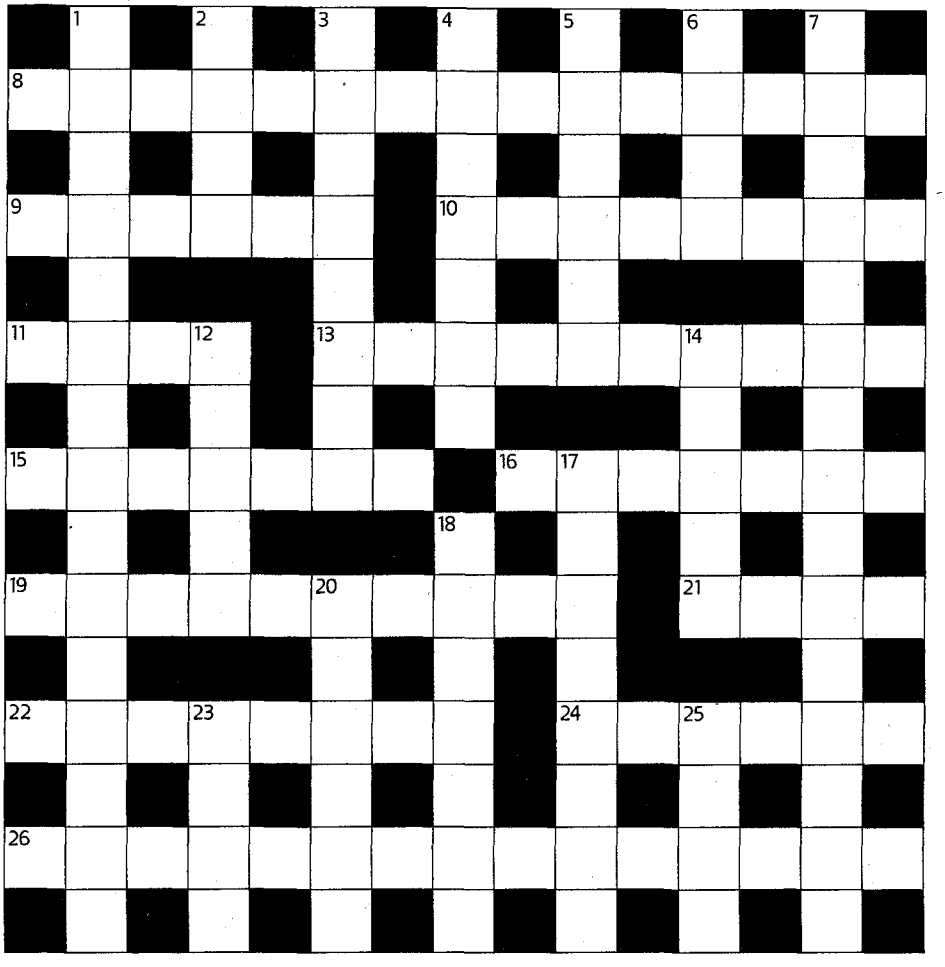

ACROSS

8 Birds on the move, as you see what gives a lift to the construction business. (9,6)

9 As you tell it, it no longer is. (6)

10 Takes the wrong turn, and sure gets confused—but still takes care of things! (8)

11 Responsible for the way the British get a lift, so it is improper here… (4)

13 …and torch, as they say, a little bit of the paper—not the heavy end. (10)

15 What some get at breakfast might be continued stories, one hears. (7)

16 In part, was to late readers where the Lily Maid hung out. (7)

19 A slight clue: the Queen has to come down in back of beyond! (10)

21 You have to take off something in the outbuilding. (4)

22 Urges one to get to a real hot place? China, perhaps! (8)

24 In Paris I take "Juin" there, being rather childish. (6)

26 Moves aimlessly about, to study a backup on the right pursuit of what got our country a lot of land. (7,8)

DOWN

1 The writer who sounds serious, putting an edge to the method. (6,9)

2 and **12** Didn't rise in time, when segments of the cricket game sprang up, one hears. (9)

3 Sluggish and indolent, being possibly shot full of it. (8)

4 Responsible for two articles, one like a teller of tall tales. (8)

5 The result of a bit too much heat being applied? (6)

6 Between Manchuria and North Korea, you see it lay up to the turnabout. (4)

7 The result of getting a flat-top at the barber shop? The First Lady in the fifties, the man added, loses 500 to one considered untouchable. (5-10)

12 See 2

14 Proving false coins, which some people seem to worship. (5)

17 Proving grass grows on a real loser—but one might have put the "fizz" in things. (4,4)

18 What consensus-minded people take up in the power supply for your car goes really fast! (7)

20 Danced, after having a few too many. (6)

23 This is what I was looking for when I went to the window and threw up, according to a seasonal visit. (4)

25 A common name that some who walk the street might be looking for. (4)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO.2961

	P	O	E	T	I	C	J	U	S	T	I	C	E	
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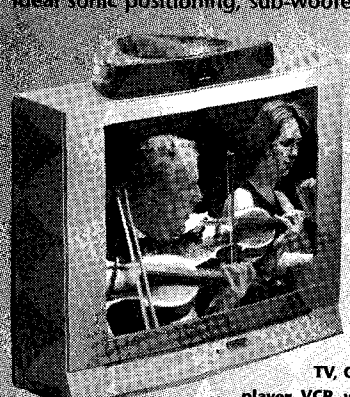

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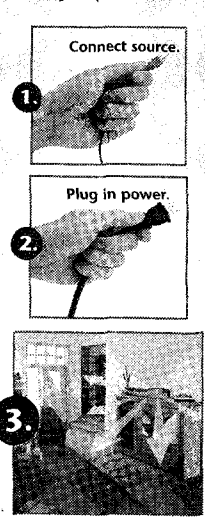

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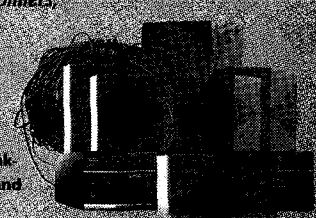

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